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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

Vi.—I am a messenger.

O.—Speak your office.

Vi.—It alone concerns your ear. I bring no overture of war,—no taxation of homage. I hold the olive in my hand: my words are as full of peace as matter.

SHAKSPEARE.

I HAD calculated, after the one-sidedness of my own barren nature, in fearing the oddities of the Archdeacon might give offence. As the most restive horse is often tamed at once by being placed in a well-broken team, so immediate was the influence of Monsieur Des Auliers' cheerful suavity and the graceful courtesy of Albertine, that I could wish nothing altered in his deportment.

Before he had been an hour at Les Epines,

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I even envied him the confidential footing on which he stood with the family; for, after accepting an invitation to stay and dine, he requested a private interview with Mrs. Hawley; during which, I was left to the old lawyer and the family portraits. At length, even the former was called away; and so impatient did I become under the consciousness that a family council was going on from which I was excluded, that, though a copper-coloured sunshine was ripening the corn-fields that clothe the uplands of Sceaux, I strolled out into the gardens, and from the gardens into the village; stood by the grave of Florian, whose fables Miss Primer had drummed into my head in childhood, per force of an ebony ruler; and endeavoured to fancy what the palace of the Duc de Maine must have been, where nothing is now to be seen but the rotunda of a Sunday orchestra;—just as travellers in Greece sentimentalize and drivel quartos over the ruins of Troy, and then come home and discover they have mistaken the site.

Too proud to be *de trop* in a party of friends, I contrived to return only in time to wash my

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hands for dinner; at which I found, with regret, two or three of the leathern-cheeked confraternity of old Des Auliers make up the party; and with surprise, that Mrs. Hawley's eyelids were swollen with weeping. What the deuce had the Archdeacon been saying to her? Nothing *very* bitter; for her manner towards him was if possible still more ingratiating than to the twaddling *confrères* of "*mon oncle;*" while upon myself, even with the tears still glittering in her eyes, she smiled with all her usual amenity.

Pre-occupied by surmises touching the origin of emotions which rendered the cheeks of Albertine so pale, and those of her uncle so feverishly red, I had scarcely leisure to note that the Archdeacon managed to make himself perfectly understood by them all; or how much valuable information he contrived to extract out of those I had so little known how to turn to account. But when the dessert was placed on table, and the heart of the prize-fruit-grower expanded with the pride of exhibiting his early peaches and nectarines to one whose eyes and mouth watered at the sight of their bloomy

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plumpness, the mystery was expounded by the old gentleman's proposing a toast in champagne —(among the elderly French, Heaven forgive them! still a dessert potation)—to the prosperous journey of his niece.

"The pressing invitation of Sire Hawley, and the auspicious occasion that presented itself in the escort of an old and valued friend of the family, had decided her to defer no longer her visit to England."

"So suddenly?" was the universal cry,—while I alone held my peace.

"Yes; she was to depart on the morrow. Professional business rendered it impossible for Monsieur le Grand Vicaire to prolong his stay!"

How I wished the sparkling Ay in which the Archdeacon was quaffing the health of Albertine might choke him on the spot!—To think of the craft that may conceal itself under a shovel hat!—To think of the cunning with which he had withheld his projects from me, till I had housed him safe under the roof of Les Epines!—

But, after all, whom had I to thank but

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myself for her departure? Was it any one's fault but my own, that for three long months I had neglected to present my letter of introduction to the family? three months,—during which, I might have so entwined myself round her heart, as to determine her unhesitating refusal of the old gentleman's proposal; while, on the other hand, my enthusiastic encomiums had perhaps been the means of stimulating Sir Robert's anxiety for her company.—Fool that I was!—A little caution, a little delay, and we might have returned to England together!—Whereas, I was *now* under marching orders for Germany; having expressly undertaken to absent myself from Yorkshire till the eve of the attainment of my majority.

Now that my chance was over, I could not picture to myself without bitter remorse the autumn I had lost. Nothing would have been easier than, after a hasty visit to Baden in compliance with my engagement, to return to Paris,—on pretence of health, or business, or no matter what,—and devote my whole existence to Albertine.

"My whole existence to Albertine!" The

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idea as it traversed my mind directed my eyes instantly towards her; and never had I found her half so lovely. At all times, her figure was grace and flexibility itself; at all times, there was a child-like purity in her fair, fair face, more ethereal than mortal visage is apt to wear. But now, the grief of parting from her kind old uncle,—the anxiety of quitting a domestic circle where she was adored, to plunge herself into the careless crowd of a strange country,—imparted so thoughtful an expression to her brow, and to her lips a smile which trembled there as tears quiver in the eyes, that she attained all that was ever wanting in her countenance—the charm of exquisite sensibility.

The friendly, fatherly way, in which Archdeacon Roxborough had talked to her of her late father-in-law, to whom she was respectfully attached, had begotten an instantaneous intimacy between them; and I saw that she listened to *his* account of Sir Robert and Hawley Chase with far greater confidence in his words than she had been pleased to bestow on mine. When *he* talked of Sir Robert's repentance of his early severity to his only son,

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and described the withering years of anxiety the old man had undergone while the heirs of his ancient house,—the sole beings upon earth in whose veins his blood was flowing,—were living in exile in a foreign country, his grey hairs afforded a guarantee that he had witnessed what he described. The Archdeacon had held her husband in his arms,—had placed him within the pale of the Christian Church. No wonder she should draw so close to his side, and look so confidingly into his face! No wonder that while he addressed her, such tender emotions pervaded her gentle frame.

How I loved her for the distress she showed at quitting that quiet house with its circle of old *sédentaires*, set up there evening after evening like wooden ninepins!—How I admired in her a total absence of that vulgar fussiness which renders most women insupportable on the eve of a long journey! She was to be accompanied by a faithful old waiting woman, who had been the confidential attendant of her late mother, by whom every preparation was quietly effected; so that her whole time and

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attention could be devoted to the kind old man she was so reluctant to abandon.

"Under any circumstances," said she, in answer to my condolences on this point, "Madame de Valmoré was to have established herself in a day or two at Les Epines, to spend the autumn with her brother; and she will make no difficulty about arriving a day or two earlier.—For my dear uncle must not be left alone.—But that you are leaving Paris, Mr. Wrottesley," she continued, "I should have endeavoured to obtain your promise to visit him often during my absence; that, through your correspondence with Sir Robert Hawley, I might learn the exact state of his health."

"You afford me double reason to regret my purposed visit to Germany!" said I, trying to infuse as much sentiment as might be into my whisper. "The prospect of being of the least service to you, or affording you a moment's pleasure, would have made me a more frequent visitor to Monsieur Des Auliers than perhaps his patience might endure."

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"You little know how indulgent he is towards young people!" she rejoined, with an air of patronage which made me feel as if a glass of cold water had been poured down my back. "Besides, the interest felt by Sir Robert in your welfare must ensure our own. In the letters brought by Archdeacon Roxborough he questions me closely concerning the impression you have made on us.—He seems to imagine you have been spending the greater part of the summer with us."—

"As I ought to have done!"—all but rose to my lips. And again, in the secresy of my heart, I cursed my folly for having failed to profit by the opportunities provided by my guardian. His inquisitiveness touching Albertine's opinion of me, afforded confirmation strong, of my previous suspicions, that a matrimonial scheme in my favour was not far distant from his thoughts.

Having contrived to draw her aside from the party, who were taking their coffee as usual in the *orangerie d'été*, it seemed incumbent on me to profit by the occasion, for the expression

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of my heartfelt regrets that I should be absent from England precisely at the moment of her visit to Yorkshire. "It would have overjoyed me," I said, "to show her the beauties of the neighbourhood!—There were scenes on my own estate, which I could not bear the thought of her visiting in company with strangers."

"Tell me which they are," was her frank reply, "and I will reserve them for some future time, when perhaps we may be there together."

I thanked her by a look,—and *such* a look! But I am afraid the dusk of the darkening twilight, prevented it from reaching its destination.

"I told you, if you remember," said she, after a pause, "that I had positively declined a winter journey to England; and Sir Robert's failing health it seems, disinclines him to wait till next summer to make my acquaintance. The trip to Paris of your venerable friend yonder—" (*my* venerable friend!) "seemed to afford a favourable opportunity; and his letters, imploring me in the name of common humanity, and for love of my poor lost Wrottesley, to

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come and see him before his eyes are closed for ever, are of a nature no human being could resist."

"No angel like yourself, could resist perhaps!" said I, almost affected. "But what alas! more natural than that you should visit England, where the brightest fortunes await you? Sir Robert will receive you with open arms,—Sir Robert will adore you!—His friends will become yours.—Wherever you turn, affection and admiration will attend your steps. All I venture to hope in return, is that my poor old country will find some favour in your sight, and that you will reconcile yourself to our climate and habits. *You* must not feel towards us like Prince Zriny and other foreigners, with whose approval we can better afford to dispense."

"From *my* criticisms," she replied, in a voice that faltered beyond concealment, "you have less to fear than you may think for. *My* prejudices, early and late, are all in favour of England. My birth-place is the birth-place of all who have best loved me—of all whom I love best."

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I should, perhaps, have said more than was altogether discreet, in answer to this; but, at that moment, the blowing of a grampus on the sanded walk behind us, sounded in my ears; and I was forced by the Archdeacon's vociferous apostrophe, to turn hastily round, and agree with him that the carriage should be ordered, that we might not intrude further on our hosts, on the eve of so long a separation. From that instant till the horses were put to, he stuck as close to our side as an oak-apple to its leaf; on pretence of proposing arrangements for the morrow's journey, and promising to be ready to a second, at the hour appointed by Albertine to call and take him up.

Our drive back to Paris would have been a silent one for any effort I felt tempted to make to enliven it. But my companion was too much pleased with the reception he had met with—the simple rational hospitality of old Des Auliers, and above all, the feminine sweetness of Albertine,—to keep his ruminations to himself.

"A charming young woman!" muttered he, "worthy, I could almost warrant her, of the great good luck awaiting her. 'Tisn't often the

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blind goddess makes such a happy hit in her vagaries! Well, well! the longer I live, the more it puzzles me to conjecture, what folks are born to. The babe that sprawls into the world clutching at a sceptre, dies with a beggar's staff in his hand; and the brat that bestrides a peeled osier, ends with wielding a marshal's truncheon. This daughter of a couple of French emigrants, reared, no doubt, on *soupe maigre* and *piquette*, without so much as bringing an heir to inherit it, becomes owner of one of the finest estates in Yorkshire;—while my cousin Car, through her mother grand-daughter to a peer of the realm, and daughter to one of our earliest baronets, as good as she is well-born and as pretty as she is good, sinks helplessly into the grave for want of an humble parsonage in which to shelter her aching head!—And why, forsooth?—Because her fool of a father has made away, for his son's behoof, of his life interest in her fortune; while the worthy young man, on whom she has fixed her affections, is one of the dozen children of a poor clergyman, with no other provision than his merits. Heigho!"

"But since you see Henry Temple's pros-

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pects in so wretched a light, my dear Archdeacon," said I, thankful to him for talking of Yorkshire, instead of probing my feelings relative to Albertine, "how came you ever to sanction his dangerous intimacy in Sir Gratian's family?"

"You're going to saddle the mischief on my shoulders, eh?" cried he, a little nettled. "Ay, ay! you've not lived for nothing, hand and glove with that master of the art of sophistry, Charley Roxborough! But if you wish to know, I'll tell ye. In the first place, understand, that I'm none of your smooth-tongued friends, who, like the shadow on the sun-dial, are seen only when the sun shines. As long as all was ready-money-and-holiday-making at the Elms, I kept snug as a field-mouse in my village furrow, unless when keeping residence at the Archdeaconry. Once in a way, or so, I spent a night at my cousin's, on my way to town; and heard with pleasure what a valuable friend the two girls had found at Wrottesley Rectory. Even had I known that Temple's brother spent his vacations there, Car when the thing began, was only thirteen; and I should have thought it

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as harmless as Mrs. Temple, or Sir Gratian, that a raw youth of eighteen or nineteen (I ask your pardon, Wrottesley), devoted his leisure to reading poetry with the girls, or leading their ponies; with the promise of rising, in time, to preceptorship in what school-prospectuses call geography and the use of the globes."

"But when they grew too old for all this?"

"*Then*, indeed, his office acquired higher importance; for he taught them all that Sir Gratian considered of less moment than holding reins or bridles, or knowing how to rear and carve a spring chicken: he initiated them into the great mysteries of their faith—

And truths divine came mended from his tongue!"—

"A task which might surely have been left to his more authorized brother!"—was my bitter rejoinder.

"His brother was engrossed by the sad illness of a suffering wife. It was during the long vacation preceding poor Mrs. Temple's last moments, that, full of love and hope and confidence in his excellence, and satisfied with his prospects as future Rector of Rainham, poor

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Caroline pledged him her faith. The moment he heard of your offering the living to young Grove, it seems, he wrote, and relinquished his claim; and, from that day, dates her decline. Her father's ruin and sister's marriage, served only to accelerate the crisis."

I had nothing to retort—nothing even to plead.

"The bent of *my* nature never lay towards love-making!" resumed the Archdeacon. "Like Henry Temple, I was told in early life that the Church must find me bread; and when I escaped from college, to a family living of two hundred a-year and a scarf obtained by family interest, thought myself a lucky dog. As ill-fate would have it, a good pipe of my own and a foolish fondness for piping, made me acceptable in company far from suitable to a parson—above all, to a poor parson. And when, like other whistling blackbirds, I was mewed up in a cage to lighten the yawning moments of royal *ennui*, all I gained by it was a taste for pleasures unsuitable to a churchman's duty of self-denial, and an Archdeaconry, for which most people consider *me* grievously unsuited."

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"But for the benefice, however, and the patronage in which it originated," said I, "your life would have consisted in one long, sunless, cheerless day!"—

"No bad sort of day, either," retorted he, "to enhance the brightness of a happier dawn, hereafter! But, as I said before, such an existence has lent itself little to philandering. I don't know but that, in my college days, I may have addressed odes to Phillis or Chloe, like other young gentlemen, and fancied my laundress into a goddess. But since I came to man's estate,—above all, since I came to parish priest's estate,—the only tender thing I ever cared for, was a sirloin or a Michaelmas goose."

"Too bad, too bad!"—cried I, interrupting him, shocked that any man who had been spending half a day in company with Mrs. Hawley, could be guilty of such treason.

"Have you any objection to hear me to an end, Master Harry?" cried he. "I was going to add, because it never was my chance to fall into company with two such girls as Car and Adela,—good in substance as in surface,—all that woman ought to be to render her in

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Heaven the angel our courtesy entitles her on earth. Had *such* happened to cross my path, I should have gone through life a far less contented mortal than you see before you; and I cordially thank Heaven for not leading me into temptation which would have put me sadly out of conceit with my ruby nose and rusty coat."

"And rendered you a less trusty escort," added I, "for a beautiful widow scarcely out of her teens."

"Jealous, eh?" retorted the Archdeacon with a smile. "Young gentleman, I heartily wish you had better grounds for the feeling!—However, you don't do wrong to look sharp; for whoever may have the job of introducing this pretty creature to Hawley Chase, 'twill be nobody's fault but your own if she ever quit the country."

That night, I did not close my eyes. Though secretly satisfied of the intentions entertained in my favour by my guardian, and though far from discontented with the sentiments evinced towards me by Albertine, the certainty of her hearing unfavourable opinions expressed con-

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cerning me in England, made me tremble at the thought of her visit. What would she feel on seeing a deserted palace like Wrottesley Hall, and finding that my mother and sisters had never crossed the threshold till its master lay senseless; she, belonging to a family the most united and affectionate!—Nor would she fail to become acquainted with the John Jocelyns, now settled at the Elms; by whom she would hear me described as at once a libertine and a dupe!—

The dread of being lowered in her estimation almost prompted me to make her an immediate offer of my hand. Once affianced to me, she would not even lend an ear to their censures. Once affianced to me, my cause would be sacred in her eyes.

But even to advert to such a thing after so short an acquaintance, seemed little short of profanation. It would be robbing her of her English birthright of decency and self-respect, to fancy her capable of being influenced in her second choice by other motives than the promptings of her heart. And could these have spoken so precipitately?

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As I leaned into her travelling carriage the following morning, (while the Archdeacon was wrangling his last with the waiter, and trying to understand why a *commissionnaire* should be so much more costly an appendage to an hotel than "boots," the post-horses making their *grelots* tinkle like a flock of sheep by snorting with impatience,) I was half tempted to follow the advice of Dr. Franklin, shut my eyes, harden my heart, and pop the question; assured of having my share in the emotions which rendered her eyelids so red and her countenance so heavy. But the utmost for which I found courage was a squeeze of the hand, which must have nearly dislocated her fingers; and a prediction, awkwardly quoted from Sheridan concerning the happy land about to be trodden by her fairy footsteps, that

> Friends in all the ag'd she'd meet,
> And lovers in the young!

—to which, just as the Archdeacon hove in sight (with his face as red as the Bayonne ham he had been discussing, and the grumbling *commissionnaire* bearing his shaving box to be thrust

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under the seat,) she hastily replied by a whisper calculated to bring the life blood to my very finger tips, that—"she wished for no better friends or lovers than those she left behind!"

The carriage had turned the corner of the Rue de Rivoli, before I became thoroughly certain that it was the common earth I stood on, and that the usual sky was expanding over my bewildered head.

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CHAPTER II.

Un léger tremblement,—une pâleur extrême,
Une convulsion de la gorge,—un blasphême,
Quelques mots sans raison balbutiés tout bas,
C'est tout ce qu'on voyait.

NAMOUNA.

Slender.—I'll ne'er be drunk while I live, again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick. I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

SHAKSPEARE.

I HAVE ventured to express a doubt whether the asphalte-paved and steeple-chasing Paris of the present day, be comparable with the Paris which knew better what it ate and drank and listened to, than what it rode, drove, or smoked. But I have no doubt whatever that the Baden of those times,—the Baden when the Grand-Duchess Stéphanie was somewhere about what the youngest of her daughters is now, was

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worth half a hundred of the Badens created by railroads and steam-boats.

The Baden of former times was more like the Ischl or Gastein of to-day: a place whither invalids and artists resort in search of health and the picturesque; and where illustrious travellers lay down their coronets like their carpet bags to resume them on quitting the place; so that the chances are ten to one the man in a blouse you jostled at the street-corner is a Serene Highness; or the fair lady whose pony dodged against your own on entering the forest, is attended by ladies of honour and addressed as "Your Majesty."

When I consider the Thompson-and-Johnson hordes who have since invaded the romantic recesses of the Black Forest,—the Cantabs and Oxonians who have performed their vulgar equestrian exploits in the valley of the Murg,—the cockney picnics, the slang, the Holborn Hill-like attempts at fashion, which have vulgarized the spot to the level of Margate or Herne Bay,—I can scarcely bear to recal the season, when as much of Paris as did not follow the Duchesse de Berri to Dieppe, was sure to be found at

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Baden,—losing at Roulette all the rouleaux Frascati had spared; or in the intimacies created by private theatricals and *parties de campagne*, what remained of reputations worn wondrously thin and threadbare by the pranks of *le petit château*, or adventures at the *bal de l'opéra*.

I arrived there with Zriny; who, meeting me at Nancy on my road, rendered so desperate by Mrs. Hawley's departure that I was willing to plunge into champagne and *écarté* to an untold amount, proposed our performing together the rest of the journey. Luckily for me, he was in very sober mood; for had the heat of his Hungarian blood suggested any exploit likely to bring us into affray with the frontier authorities, I would have swum the Rhine with him, or hurled my case of Havannahs at the head of the Custom House officers, or defied the united squadrons of the Gross-Herzogliche army, with pleasure, as a mere outlet for the irritation of my spirits.

But, after all, tom-fooleries of this nature are far oftener executed with the vulgar ambition of astonishing, than from inclination or

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impulse. After seeing as much of the world as most men, I am as ready to attest that I never knew a man genuinely eccentric, as that I never heard an impromptu *bon mot*. I have lived among wits and "renowners:" but their sallies and sallyings-forth, were invariably the result of premeditation.

My first hint, on this subject, was from Prince Zriny himself; who stood too well in the world to care about standing better.

"For heaven's sake, don't throw your money about in that way!" cried he, on seeing me give a five-franc piece where a fifth part of it would have been over-payment. "You will be taken for a Russian prince, or some other primitive savage." And, "for heaven's sake, don't drink your champagne out of a tumbler," said he, on another occasion, "or you will be taken for an Heidelberg student—a *Bursch*-ranger."

Just so had I been rebuked in London, by Charley Roxborough, when I made my first appearance, encrusted with Cantab-cubbishness; and endeavoured to witch the world with follies, pardonable only in first and second child-

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hood, to beardless cornets, or gray-beard field marshals.

There was certainly some encouragement to follow Zriny's example in the eagerness with which he was welcomed by the charming young Duchesses and Countesses, the queens of Parisian fashion, to whom the *olskois* and *ilzoffs* and *itzins* annually assembled at Baden, were vainly addressing *billets doux*, sanded with diamond dust.—The "primitive savages," with their brigades of carriages, legions of servants, and interminable purses and mustachios, had not a chance against his easy self-confidence; and by the time he had called me "*ce pauvre Rott'slie*" two or three times in their presence, I was accepted as his Sancho Panza,—a harmless young Englishman of good family, the victim of a gigantic fortune and the spleen.

"You must grant your protection to my poor Rott'slie," said he, in presenting me to the Princesse Sabine de L—, one of the prettiest little coquettes of the Faubourg St. Germain. "Rott'slie is dying of a surfeit of guineas. His

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English hypochondriacism is just now so strong upon him, that it is not without a shudder I see him look hard into a cutler's or apothecary's shop."

Thus announced, the dread of their ridicule naturally brightened my countenance. Even after learning from the Archdeacon on his return to Yorkshire, (Sir Robert, I suspect was too indignant to write) that little hope was entertained of Caroline Roxborough, and that Lord and Lady John Jocelyn were among the first to welcome Mrs. Hawley as a valuable addition to their neighbourhood, I overcame my feelings sufficiently to play the prompter while Zriny, the Princesse de L,— and Mademoiselle Mélanie de Bonval, were rehearsing the principal parts in *La Femme Chatte.* I cared as little to pass for the incarnation of a Frenchman's *beau idéal* of a rich Englishman, (*i. e.* an ass perpetually on the verge of *felo-de-se*, from the disappointment of finding that enjoyment cannot be bought ticketed at a shop, like any other sort of goods in demand,) as to allow Zriny and his set to discover the extent of my astonishment at their sayings and doings.

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After the rational sobriety of Monsieur Des Auliers' *bourgeois* circle, the dare-all recklessness of speech of my new friends amazed me not a whit the less for the quiet unconcern with which it was uttered. Instead of monstering nothings, *they* treated monstrosities *like* nothing.

I must say for the French—and precisely because it is in direct opposition with our street-corner notions of the French character—that all they say and do which would be better left unsaid and undone, passes in the quietest manner. No people are so easy to live with. No people are so little apt to make a fuss about trifles. On their social stage, there is no such thing as a flourish of trumpets. Whether their saints become sinners or their sinners saints, it is done without private outcry or public clamour. None of the mock indignations by which English society assigns itself a certificate of good morals! The only cant tolerated among them lies between a candidate and his college on the eve of an election; for the cogent reason that elsewhere and otherwise it does not "pay."

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I will not deny that after the formalities of English life and the tameness of Les Epines, the facile irregularity of Parisian *bon ton* appeared exceedingly *piquant*. I had seen Zriny too well received by Albertine and Madame de Valmoré to doubt that his way of life was such as they approved; and not a little was I charmed to find myself free of a coterie where the manners and appearance of Charley Roxborough and his imitators would have been scouted as ultramontane.

It would be something, on my return to England, to have acquired a jargon he did not understand, and a *disinvoltura* as unattainable to his natural stiffness as the double *entrechats* of Didelot or Deshayes; with which view, I set about studying the shibboleth which was to assign me an advantage over him, as ardently as though reading for a degree.

I suppose I succeeded. By dint of employing the same tradespeople, and parrot-ing his recklessness of diction and gesture, I contrived to produce much such a copy of Prince Zriny, as some worn-out lithograph affords of one of Van Dyck's *chefs-d'œuvre*. For I observed that

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Captain and Lady Mary De Vesci, who were among the few English staying at Baden, and who at first ceremoniously returned my bow, now averted their faces whenever I passed them; and as I did not *then* surmise that they were afraid of laughing in my face, I attributed Captain de Vesci's conduct to envy of the awkward boy to whose sister he had vainly paid his addresses.

But whatever my country people might think of me, foreigners were unanimous in favour of one who so promptly made their language and habits his own, and so readily made *theirs* his bank-notes and rouleaux. Charles Roxborough had taught me if I played like a fool, at least to lose like a gentleman; and I soon became a sort of pet in the circles frequented by Anton Zriny.

"*Je vous présente mon veau d'or.!*" he used to say, in my presence to every new comer, with an off-hand frankness that rendered it impossible to take offence; and my good humour as a butt soon promoted me to higher privileges. I was selected by the Princess to make arrangements for her pic-nics. I was chosen as con-

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fidant to detain jealous husbands in the rear, when flirtations were going on in our riding-parties. I was even required to engage Mélanie de Bonval for six consecutive valses, that she might see no more than was indispensable of the flirtations of her *chaperon*. We made a sight-seeing expedition to Strasburg, in which I proved my genius in the commissariat line, by providing carriages and a banquet, against our arrival; when I was rewarded by loud exclamations from Zriny, the Princess, and Clermont Tonnerres, and La Tour Duplessis, without end, who were lounging and lunching at my expense. "*Ce brave Rott'slie*," they protested, was worth his weight in gold.

It was soothing enough to become an object of envy to the *olskois*, and *ilzoffs*, and *itzins*, who were not admitted to show so much as the tip of their caviar-smeared mustachios, among these brilliant Parisians! I was the only Englishman admitted to the *soirées* of the Grand-Duchess; and the good-humoured King of Bavaria, whose jolly laugh reminded me of that of the Archdeacon, often congratulated Mélanie and her fair friends, on having at their disposal

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the *preux chevalier par excellence* of the place.

I could not but wish that Mrs. Hawley were able to see me the *fleur des pois* of a set she had herself described to me as uniting supremacy of fashion with the highest blood left unspilled by the revolution; and at length, on pretext of being uneasy at Sir Robert's prolonged silence, sat down one day and endited her a description of the pleasures and pastimes of Baden, as plentifully sprinkled over with the *beaux noms* of the *belles dames* of whom I fancied myself the chosen squire, as though I were the "own correspondent" of a Yankee newspaper. Duchesses and countesses slipped from my pen like pearls from a silken thread.

Of Yorkshire, according to the new tone I had adopted, I affected to talk patronizingly; trusting, "she was not dreadfully shocked by the rusticity of my country neighbours, or bored to extinction by their dulness." But they did not detain me long from Baden; on whose frivolities and scandals I dwelt as if of more moment than the highest interests of Church or State. Above all, I described the charms of

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Mélanie de Bonval, with a familiarity which might have excited jealous emotions in the bosom of a Semiramis; intending my correspondent to understand that the best *valseuse* of the Faubourg St. Germain, awaited only my nod to become Mrs. Wrottesley, of Wrottesley Hall.

So little, however, did I know of Mademoiselle de Bonval, as to be unaware that she united the attraction of great wealth, to that of the highest fashion. For she had a handsome brother holding a distinguished place among the flutterers of the court of *le petit château;* and, accustomed to the primogenital privileges of England, I forgot that, in the opulent families of modern France, a brother and sister are co-heirs; so that, innocently enough, I was conferring on myself the shame of an interested courtship. I could afford, however, to bear some blame, so overloaded was I with female trust and confidence; a distinction avoided like the plague by a Frenchman of the world, as defining him to be *un homme sans conséquence* —an object of jealousy to no mortal breathing.

One evening, on our way back to our hotel,

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to drink tea with Princess Hetzenheim, a friend of Madame de L,—after sauntering in and out of the public ball-room only to mark our scorn of the mixed company inevitable at bathing places,—I was discussing with Zriny and La Tour Duplessis a pic-nic to take place on the morrow, in the Gardens of the *Favorite;* to do honour to which, I had been numskull enough to send to Paris and Frankfort for all the delicacies of the season, and out of season, so as to distance the gorgeous but grosser entertainments devised by the *olskois, ilzoffs,* and *itzins.*

"*Entre nous,* my dear Rott'slie," cried La Tour Duplessis, "we are sure of something more attractive than either *langoustes,* or *ortolans,* or *vin de paille.* To-day's post brought me a letter from Nestor Platicheff; and he and D'Estomont will be here to-night."

"In time to be cooked for to-morrow?" said I,—for he seemed to class them among the eatables.

"As they left Paris yesterday at noon," he rejoined, "travellers in such weather ought to arrive ready grilled. But under any circum-

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stances, Mélanie and Princess Hetzenheim will find them perfectly palatable.

"I do not know D'Estomont," said I, peevish at finding two of my choicest patronesses thus coolly appropriated.

"Not know D'Estomont?—You must be joking!" exclaimed both my companions.

"D'Estomont is as well known from one end of Europe to the other as Jean Maria Farina," added Zriny. "You *must* have seen him at Paris!"

On which, heartily ashamed of my ignorance, I stammered out that "I was not aware they alluded to *that* D'Estomont!" which satisfied them;—more particularly as we were now at the Princess's door, where half-a-dozen pretty women and a mediatized Prince or two awaited our coming, to commence what are called (ironically I presume when played outside the door of a nursery) *les jeux innocens*. If certain of our forfeits were innocent, I should like to know what is considered guilty!

We played so late, or rather the men sat up smoking together so late after the fair forfeit-

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players had separated for the night, that I woke next day only in time to learn that the *comestibles* had made their appearance, and were off in a covered van to the Favoriten Schloss, under the superintendence of Félix my courier; with some chance, as it was a burning day at the close of August, that the contents of the hampers were already in as complete a state of dissolution as the confederation of the Rhine.

It was pleasant enough, while arranging into irresistibility the folds of my tie, to be interrupted by the arrival of little scented billets, demanding answers to questions which rendered reply impossible; fussy little missives, delivered by hey-ducks and chasseurs nearer seven feet high than six,—the giants who have succeeded to the pretty pages once attendant on a lady's bower. One offered me a seat in her calêche; another asked for a place in mine; a third insisted on my driving her in her husband's phaeton; while a fourth proposed, as the pleasantest thing in the world under a sun calculated to produce Hochheimer and Johannesberg of a vintage rivalling the comet growth, an eques-

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trian progress to the Favorite, on worn-out hacks and the dusty *chaussée* of a public road!—

Every billet was in turn read, answered, and locked in my travelling desk; and had any one asked me whether I had patience to receive such flummering appeals to my sensibilities as the *petit poulet* of Madame von Hetzenheim, I would have replied with Rosalind,—"Ay! and twenty such!"

But luckily my looking-glass alone was witness of the Malvolio-like smile with which I completed my toilet. When I proceeded in my britska to take up Zriny and La Tour Duplessis, —who, on the plea of wishing to smoke, had declined accompanying their belles, and thus procured me the shower of notes which had fallen on my head,—I felt as like "young Harry with his beaver up," or young Ammon preparing to vault upon Bucephalus, as if Hotspur lay dead or the world in chains, at my feet!

Having already taken on myself a bachelor's privilege of whispering in the ear of my lovely (ass that I am! I was about to write lov-*ing*)

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country-women,—I assume it once more, and for a last time, to observe that, when English ladies get up a pic-nic, their first care is their dress. When gown, bonnet, and sash are fixed upon, they conceive the preliminaries adjusted. But far different is the case with foreigners, who are unquestionably greater adepts in infusing spirit into the diversions of life. *Their* day of pleasure must be a joint-stock company concern. Every body is to be in good humour, and endeavour to promote the good humour of the rest. Attempts to outshine, or cut out, would destroy the harmony of the party. The admiration must be as equitably shared as the game pies and champagne.

My beauties, for beauties they were, had not added a flower or a flounce to their every-day attire. It would have made them neither happier nor merrier to be a little finer than usual. On the contrary, the child-like simplicity of a Frenchwoman's summer toilet, which soap and water suffices to renovate, opposes no obstacle to rural pleasures; and they are content to find seats on rock or greensward,—even though the sward be dusty and the rock green,—without

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exhibiting the fastidious antics which so often render ridiculous a picnic of English fashionables.

We arrived late at the Favorite; for a basket of fruit had been forgotten, which Zriny's factotum insisted on placing in the boot of our carriage: the manœuvres to effect which arrangement detained us so long, that we were compelled to swallow the dust left flying on the road by our predecessors.

Apparently, they had not missed us. Long before we reached the *bosquet* where the table was spread, the merriment of the assembled *convives* reached our ears. They were laughing so heartily, that, with the petulance of a narrow mind, I fancied we must be the subjects of their mirth. And for once I was right.

"Behold them!" cried the voice of Nestor Platicheff, addressing the Princesse de L—, as we made our appearance! "Behold them, and our Vatel's life is saved! Let him know that he need not fall upon his carving knife till the next pic-nic. My dear Rott'slie," continued he, "our trust is in *you!* Baptiste has just

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informed us that unless your carriage is packed with peaches, grapes, and melons, we may look to the brambles in the hedges for our dessert."

True to my English characteristics, I was half inclined to be huffy at this free and easy apostrophe. But Zriny caught the ball and threw it back to him, by protesting that, aware of his arrival, we had judged it superfluous to purvey for the party. "Where *you* are present, my dear Nestor," said he, "nothing short of nectar and ambrosia will go down."

They all laughed heartily,—because prepared by good humour and fine weather to laugh at whatever came uppermost. But the confusion produced by our *entrée* rendered impossible the introduction to Nestor's travelling companion, for which I had prepared myself; and till we took our places at table in the snug green nook, which borrowed a thousand charms by contrast with the dusty road we had been traversing, I saw nothing of him but the back of an admirably well-made coat worn by an admirably well-made man. Of the light of his coun-

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tenance, no one had just then the benefit but Mélanie de Bonval, to whom he was addressing assiduous homage.

Already, I began to feel uncomfortable. A certain uneasy consciousness apprized me that I was in the presence of one who had the mastery over me. Self-satisfied as I had been the preceding night, I suddenly recollected my scarcity of years, whiskers, and knowledge of the world. How much more when, just as my plate of *bisque d'écrevisses* was placed before me, a glance towards the place occupied by Mademoiselle de Bonval, convinced me that I had indeed seen at Paris "the well-known D'Estomont;" who was no other than the handsome individual I had observed seated behind Mrs. Hawley at the opera, and whom I afterwards noticed dashing along the Sceaux road, with Nestor Platicheff by his side.

The man seemed fated to be my evil genius! Already, I was indebted to him for *one* uncomfortable evening; and the attention directed towards him from every part of the dinner-table, while he poured his gay nonsense into the willing ear of Mélanie, convinced me,

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sorely against my will, that, for the remainder of his stay, I was fated to play Violino 2^{0}.

Condemned alas! to restrict *my* attentions to Madame von Hetzenheim, the audacious Parisian's endeavour to charm resembled a distant display of fireworks; *i. e.*, every now and then a vague effusion of light, followed by the loud applause of the by-standers; and like a country actor, when a star arrived from London brings down the house in his line of parts, I could have eaten the interloper!

Charles the Fifth is said to have endured more vexation, in his monastery in Estremadura, from the difficulty of making twenty or thirty clocks and watches keep time together, than he had experienced in producing unanimity in his factious Imperial Council Chamber. But had the *ci-devant* Emperor ever attempted to keep in charity with each other half a dozen jealous rivals, he would have thought less of the discordance of the watches. In the instance in question, I admit being as eager to get up a quarrel, no matter with whom, as might have done honour to the county of Tipperary.

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The expressive phrase of having "*le vin mauvais*," for which I know no politer translation than the "pure English undefiled" of Elizabethan time, of being "sulky in one's cups," has been so often applied to me in the course of my life, that I fear I must plead guilty to being a disagreeable fellow after a few extra glasses of wine. But the champagne that rendered me sullen, made D'Estomont what drink made Lady Macbeth,—"bold;" and amidst the singing in my ears and promiscuous rattle of plates, knives, forks, and glasses mingled with laughter and popping of corks, which create so strange a confusion in the faculties of a man who is getting bosky, I could single out the rich and varied tones of his voice as he recounted anecdote after anecdote, and hazarded jest after jest,—like a well-graced actor, certain of himself and his audience.

I could not, however, so much as man a rush against the breast of my rival. I had thrown myself thoroughly out of the lists. The slightest attempt to put lance in rest, or even foot in stirrup, would have flung me discountenanced to the ground.

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"But Rott'slie? Where's Rott'slie? I don't hear the voice of Rott'slie!" cried Zriny, as he divided a third peach with Princess Hetzenheim, —either because, remembering how hard I had laboured to obtain the applause of the Athenians in gathering together the materials of the feast, he felt a little compunction at my being so totally eclipsed in my sphere,—or perhaps, because himself a little jealous of the sudden favour achieved by D'Estomont. But I did not thank him for thus directing attention towards me; for the new-comer, on hearing me addressed, glanced along the table with the sort of abhorrent indulgence with which people look under it when the master of the house calls to his dog lying in ambush among their legs; till, his eyes having rested on my stultified face, he whispered something to Mélanie to which she audibly replied, "*Mais non, mais non!*" probably because he accused me of being something the worse for a succession of bumpers.

A moment afterwards, the feast being at an end, we were all on foot; treading on air, as one does when rising from a foreign dinner, and much in the condition of school-boys rushing

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forth from durance at their play-hour. I doubt, indeed, whether the smallest dame-school that turns out its pinafored urchins on a village green, ever supplied children more bent on mischief than the members of an aristocratic pleasure party in the full exuberance of champagne.

Unluckily, there was a gardener's ladder lying at hand, left by the men employed to suspend coloured lamps in the bosquets. With this, the only implement at hand, the Prinz von Hetzenheim, Zriny, and one or two of the more athletic men present, began a course of gymnastics; till lo! a sudden "coquerico" from a neighbouring tree having caused us to look up, we were startled by the sight of Nestor Platicheff pretending to clap his wings in triumph, some twenty feet above our heads.

Of course it became necessary for those who were further gone in champagne than himself, to accomplish double the ascent. Hetzenheim clambered to the upper branches of a beech-tree to look down upon us, where his flaxen hair and beard exhibited a strange resemblance to a Polar bear; while Zriny, dapper and agile

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as a monkey, clung from bough to bough till he overtopped him. At every fresh feat, new cries of delight arose from the knot of foolish women gathered below.

Was it to be expected that I should content myself to remain the only blockhead of the party unapplauded? The moment Platicheff (who had commenced this stupid mode of recreation) descended from his tree, I advanced to take his place; and like Hetzenheim, commenced operations by throwing off my coat.

"Interfere, my dear Princess, interfere!" said D'Estomont, in an audible whisper. "Mr. Wrottesley is not in a state to be foot-sure."

But the Princess only laughed the louder, at the idea of seeing a man who was scarcely able to stand on *terra firma*, attempting to find footing on branches hardly strong enough to support a sparrow; while Mélanie de Bonval betted aloud that I should not reach the fork of the tree attained with ease by my friend Nestor.

The consequence was, that with eyes blinded by rage and Fissefraiquin, and hands relaxed by the swimming of my brains, I managed to

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scramble some fifteen feet higher than had been accomplished by Platicheff. The last thing I remember discerning from my giddy perch, was the insulting attitude of D'Estomont, as he pointed out to the treacherous Mélanie, seated on a *banc de gazon* the better to enjoy the scene, the clumsy distortions by which I was trying to secure my footing. The next thing I heard was the crashing of the branches, as I fell through them to the ground; which the horrified bystanders, who found me insensible at the foot of the tree, bleeding from ears, and nose, and mouth, conceived to be the crashing of my bones.

It must be admitted that the next of kin of Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley, Esq., of Wrottesley Hall, had at that moment a parlous chance of succeeding to his undevised estate!—

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CHAPTER III.

My revenge
Was born in laughter. But it will endure
Like oaks which, born in May, seem slight and weak,
But, having a score of winters on their heads,
Grow strong and rugged.

PROCTOR.

As my gentle public, even allowing it the utmost exercise of novel-reading credulity, cannot doubt my being alive at this present writing, it were mere waste of time and ink to endeavour to get up a panic.

Suffice it, therefore, that I was "scotch'd, not killed,"—or rather "kilt," not "killed;"—and that the eminent surgeon to whose attendance I was conveyed back by Zriny and my servants as fast as horses could lay legs to the ground, pronounced that no man alive could have accomplished a fall of five-and-thirty

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feet more judiciously. The crashing branches had broken my fall instead of my limbs; and the extensive hemorrhage neutralized the previous excess of champagne. Quiet and complete seclusion were prescribed; and in a week or ten days, I was to be as well as ever, provided I led an unmolested life.

This was signified to me when I woke next morning after a heavy sleep produced by opiates, with a splitting head-ache and every bone in my frame aching. But the cure was scarcely more palatable than the disease; so greatly was my detestation of the insolent D'Estomont aggravated by fever and opium.—All night, I had seemed to see him whispering into the small white ear of Mélanie; and I doubt whether the Moor who haunted the visions of the English opium-eater constituted a more persevering night-mare. The thought of his scornful smile, while I sat perched like Maître Corbeau in my tree, disposed me to "kill, kill, kill," as blood-thirstily as Lear: small-swords, pistols, blunderbusses,—I cared not what,—must give vent to the ill-blood that raged between us. I had seen the fellow hang

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over the graceful shoulder of Albertine;—I had seen him provoke against me the shrugging shoulders of Mélanie;—I had seen him sneer at the cut of my coat, and my own cut when uncoated;—and nothing short of seeing him measure the ground at my feet as *I* had measured it at *his*, would satiate my feverish fury.

I had fortunately a reasonable being to deal with in Zriny. Promising me I should fight as soon as I was well enough,—as the surest way of making me well,—he readily engaged himself to be my second; convinced that, on dismissing the surgeon, I should be in no hurry to return into his hands. I had previously exacted a promise that no one would alarm my friends in England, by announcing an accident which my medical attendants declared would have no injurious results; and so strictly did I observe the regimen prescribed, that, at the close of a week, I actually crossed my bed-room with as firm a step as Achilles.

During these eight tedious days, my friends did not forget me.—Half-a-dozen *femmes-de-chambre*—black, white, and gray—gray, white,

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and black,—made their appearance in succession at my door, at first with little flummering messages, at last with little flummering notes;—princesses, countesses, and Mélanies, accusing themselves *à l'envi l'une de l'autre*, of having prompted or sanctioned my imprudent exploits:—all, miserable at my sufferings—all, living only in the hope of my convalescence. For women, French women in particular, dearly love a sensation; and my disaster rendered me for a time the lion of the party.

But the person who did not restrict his attention to flummering notes or catechising my courier, was Zriny. Every day, he spent some hours in my room; smoking, while he listened to my bold disjointed chat; and when he laid aside his cigar to take his turn of talking, relating stories such as might have made the Grand Turk laugh himself into hysterics with listening to. He was the very fellow for a sick-room, where, as in my case, the sickness held out no perspective of black crape and broad hems; and it was to him far more than the doctors I felt indebted for my recovery, when, on the tenth day, I was ordered

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to exchange chicken-broth for Markbrünner, and make a farewell bow to my doctors.

"And now, my dear Zriny," said I, when, half an hour afterwards, he shook me by the hand in gratulation on my convalescence; "now, at least, you will make no further objection to carry a message for me to D'Estomont?"

"Not the slightest," he replied, "if you will tell me where I am likely to find him."

"At the Badische Hof. He and Nestor Platicheff lodge in adjoining rooms."

"Not just now, I fancy!" rejoined the Prince, shaping the points of his moustachios. "Nestor is off for St. Petersburg; where an uncle, or a grandfather, or a something, has been considerate enough to die and leave him an estate of five thousand serfs."

"But D'Estomont—"

"Is by this time either across the Simplon, or in Scotland, or at Lisbon, or on his road to the moon; for he seemed sadly uncertain whither to direct his steps when he started from hence two days ago."

"This is treachery indeed!" cried I, with

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unassumed indignation. "Did you not give me your solemn promise to—"

"Aid and abet you in calling to account one of my intimate friends, as soon as you felt your arm strong enough to cut his throat?—Certainly! But it is no fault of mine that he sets off upon his travels on a Tuesday, when it is not till Thursday your sword-arm comes into murdering condition. I did my best to promote a little homicide, by my endeavours to restore you to health. But one would think that Mélanie de Bonval had an intuitive knowledge of your intentions; for nothing,—not even an invitation for to-morrow from the grand-duchess,—would induce her to stay another day."

"They are gone together, then!" cried I, with increasing warmth.

"Fie, fie!—The Princess and her fair friend have returned most decorously to Paris; while D'Estomont, who is endowed with the bump of decorum, for which your countrymen are so remarkable, took an opposite direction. You Englishmen take as much care of your reputations as a beauty of her complexion; for

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in England, the newspapers and hustings render character a marketable commodity."

"I trust," was my indignant rejoinder, "that we are susceptible to influences somewhat less sordid. But what have England and the English in common with Mademoiselle de Bonval's admirer?"

"Why, you do not pretend ignorance that D'Estomont is your countryman?"

"As Mrs. Hawley is my countrywoman, perhaps,—from being born during the emigration of her family!"

"By birth, breeding, and ancestry—by every thing, in short, but habits and inclination

Sparta hath many a worthier son than he!"

cried I. "Great Britain can dispense with the worshipped and worshipful Monsieur D'Estomont. But how came he by his French birth —or rather, by his French name?"

"There is nothing French in his name, except our mispronunciation," retorted Zriny. "Some of these days he is to be a *milor*, or something of that description; *titré*, at all events."

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"Lord D'Estomont!" said I, laughing heartily at the notion. "Yet why not, as well as 'De' any thing else!—Of late we have had wondrous batches of new peers; and the King threatens to ennoble his physician and banker's clerk, if certain duchesses who delight in snubbing the upstart favourites of the royal cottage, persist in their airs."

"Assure yourself, however," persisted Zriny, "that D'Estomont's rank, whatever it may be, if not quite equal to that of the Montmorencys, is not a thing of yesterday. I remember, one day, when we were all bragging, his telling us that his family left Normandy with the Conqueror; and that *his* branch, which is a junior one, was ennobled by the Stuarts."

D'Estomont!" said I, musing aloud, as if trying to revive my peerage reminiscences.

"Or more properly, I believe, De Stomont," resumed Zriny. "But you must have seen his card. For though he sent daily to inquire, I know he called in person to leave his P. P. C."

An appeal to the servant produced the voucher in question.

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"STORMONT!—Reginald Stormont! What an ass have I been!" cried I.

"Yes.—De Stomont—Reginald de Stomont!" repeated Zriny, fancying our pronunciation exactly the same,—and adding the "De" as a necessary adjunct of nobility.

"If I had but known it from the first!" I exclaimed. "Stormont is an intimate friend of my family!—The uncle to whose title he is to succeed is their nearest country neighbour."

"Which accounts for his knowledge of your name and connections. The night of your accident, before we were certain of the extent of the mischief, he mentioned that, if you died, your sisters would become two of the wealthiest co-heiresses in England."

This reference to my sisters carried me back involuntarily to Reginald Stormont's flirtation with Dora; and though I had never understood the truth of the business, and am well aware that in nine cases out of ten where a man is said to behave ill, his misbehaviour consists in disappointing expectations for which he afforded no foundation, my desire to make an end of

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Albertine's and Mademoiselle de Bonval's admirer acquired new vigour from the discovery that he had been also the admirer of my sister; and that, knowing my name, he had not been at the pains to know more of me, by asking an introduction.—I was terribly nettled.

"And now, my dear Rott'slie, not to lose time in dwelling on what affords far from pleasant reminiscences," said Zriny, "listen to my new projects.—I need not tell you that I declined the proposal of our friends that I should accompany them on their journey, from not choosing to leave you alone here—"

"Most kindly and considerately," cried I.

"No, most *justly!* I consider myself in some degree responsible for an accident which, soberer than yourself, I should have interfered to prevent. But no more on that chapter. I have it at heart that you should forthwith accompany me to Hungary."

"To *Hungary?*"

"To my father's, at Lyarák; where I am going to enjoy a few weeks' *battues;* after which, we will return together to Paris. You have no settled plans, and mean to wander

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about till Christmas;—I can promise you good entertainment for man and horse as far as November."

Though longing to revert to Stormont and my grievances, I stood too much in awe of Zriny's raillery, and was too much indebted to his kindness to indulge my ill-temper. And where would have been the use of endeavouring to track the peregrinations of a man quite as likely to be on his road to the Caucasus, as to the heights of Montmartre? With as good a grace as I could muster, therefore, I accepted Zriny's proposition; and in the course of a few days, was judged strong enough for the journey.

How often have I heard it asserted among my countrymen, that the name of Englishman carries with it on the road a charm which causes horses to fly, and landlords to kneel! Yet as far as my experience is concerned, I never found a foreign-office passport of any avail except in influencing the sum total of my bill! On the contrary, after exploring almost every country in Europe, and some out of it, I have no hesitation in saying that, among the lower

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classes, — the classes with which travelling brings one in contact,—the name of Englishman suffices to provoke animosity and ill-will. It may have been otherwise in former days. But John Bull now prides himself on reform and economy, as much as formerly on lavish openness of hand; and John Bull's footmen and lady's maids, by their insolent airs and exactions,—their outcries after Warren's blacking and Cheshire cheese,—have made the high roads of the world too hot to hold him. He is forced to wait for his dinner while less peremptory foreigners are served; and finds inferior rooms assigned him merely to spite the servingmen whose road, from Dan to Beersheba, is a succession of dammees.

I was made especially sensible of this by the pleasantness of my journey with Zriny. As he was naturally the spokesman of the party, it could only be his gentlemanly frankness, differing as widely from the dry *hauteur* of the high-bred Englishman as from the facetious familiarity of the low-bred, which procured us such prompt attention, such excellent service, and charges less by half than awaited the per

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centage of my courier. With Zriny, no one took liberties,—with Zriny, no one ventured on imposition.—He spoke their language, and bore a name familiar to them; which made his word a law.

We spent a week in Vienna; and though to my friendly companion I expressed only my admiration of the best *corps de ballet* I had ever seen, embellished by the Ellslers in their girlhood and Brugnoli in her zenith, and my enthusiasm for the wild sallies of Therese Krones and her phantasmagoric crew, I may be permitted to confide to my public that I was grievously disappointed. I had expected grandeur, antiquity, and Gothic quaintness, in the city of the modern Cæsars; and found only a less brilliant Paris,—a Paris such as existed at the accession of Lotis the Fifteenth. Nothing distinctive about it;—nothing, (with the exception of a singularly uxorious sepulchral monument,) to remind one of Maria Theresa, or of the heroic Vienna that bad defiance to Turkey and her scymitars.

At that season of the year, the shores of the Danube were as dull as those of the Thames:

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even the fine palaces of the suburbs being deserted by the Austrian nobles whose place in the aristocracy of Europe is so imposing, for their hunting seats in Bohemia, Styria, or Hungary; and I soon became as impatient as Zriny to start for the forests.

I did not, of course, fail to make fuss enough about the misery of a shooting expedition without my paraphernalia; and would fain have despatched an express from Baden to Yorkshire for my gun-cases and the countless etcetera supplied by Nock and Manton for the encumberment of sporting life. But Zriny laughed so heartily at the idea of being dependent on one's gun, and promised so stoutly that his father's armoury at Lyarák should supply me with what was far better calculated for the sport we were about to engage in than London gunsmith ever devised, that I was fain to be content.

Of all the men I ever met with, Anton Zriny was the one who had the readiest faculty of persuading me, without leaving me humiliated by the consciousness of having given in. Precisely because there was no *arrière-pensée*

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in him! He used only straight forward arguments, from having no ulterior object. *His* high-breeding was not like Charley Roxborough's, the result of a well-modulated voice, a graceful bow, a well-tied cravat, and well varnished boots; but the candour of an honourable nature, standing in a good position, and living only among his equals. It is the fusion of classes which begets, in English society, those two most vulgar of vulgar errors,—insolence from high to low, and toadyism from low to high:—exclusivism and finery, like other offensive things which shall be nameless, being nuisances of London growth.

I had communicated from Baden with Gripham and Co., requiring them to forward me to Vienna a letter of credit for a thousand pounds, in terms which, from a young man within four months of attaining his majority, it would not have been safe for attorneys desiring to retain his practice to neglect; and I consequently turned my face towards Hungary in the overflowing spirits apt to accompany, in extreme youth, an overflowing purse. Neither the health of Caroline Roxborough,—the flagitious

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conduct of her brother,—the indignation of Sir Robert Hawley, or the instalment of Albertine at the Chase,—weighed much upon the mind of one who was proceeding to his first campaign in boar-hunting, in a new country, among new faces, with one of the pleasantest companions in the world.

I then looked upon Hungary as I now look upon Japan; as a country full of interest, which I was as little likely to visit as if situated in the planet Mars. For as yet, steam-boats on the Danube not only were not, but had been pronounced impossible, by legions of engineers who wasted the substance of the Prince de Montfort in endeavouring to establish them. And to attempt to enter Hungary by any other means than water-carriage, it required to be born an Esterhazy or a Sandor: the high road between Vienna and Pesth being the only one acknowledged by any vehicle of higher pretensions than a pack-waggon. Now-a-days that Murray's Guide Book, abetted by railroads and steam-boats, conveys a man from China to Peru without difficulty, and above all carries him through Hungary as easily as the post conveys a

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stamped letter from Piccadilly to Newington Butts, I can scarcely account for the state of excitement with which I caught sight of the gilded steeples of Presburg,—the seat of the lordly Diet of the most chivalrous country of modern times.

My notions of geography being as vague as those of most well-educated young Englishmen, I had always so incorporated the notion of Hungary with that of the Carpathian mountains, (which in the cheap school maps in use at Eagle House were pourtrayed as a very black range of mole-hills running straight across the kingdom,) that I expected to find the majestic Danube flowing between barriers of rocks, like the Rhine above Coblentz; and great was my disappointment on perceiving an illimitable plain extended before me, like fifty Salisburys rolled into one; or rather like the least picturesque portions of Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, or Cambridge. Every now and then, the roofs of a village peeping above its surrounding pollards, with the uniformity of a Moravian establishment or some model town of the United States, reminded one of the Dutch villages of our toy

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shops. But I looked long and vainly for Baronial Castles frowning in the midst of gloomy forests, as in the days of Ragótski. Tekeli, I saw, was a mere melodrame, one of the numerous hoaxes of Theodore Hook; and Hungary, after all, as flat as if viewed from Tilbury Fort. The only remarkable object that met my eye, was the one which induced Voltaire's traveller to pronounce himself *en pays civilisé;—i. e.*, a permanent stone gallows at the entrance of every town.

Would that those who invented the roads and the system of travelling by *vorspann* had been hanged upon them! Not because I was fresh from the luxurious transit of the great North road. Had I come straight from the log roads of Connecticut or Red Russia, I should not the less have sworn at the huge holes into which, at the risk of breaking our springs and bones, every now and then the carriage floundered, as worthy of a country still subject to the *corvée*.

Nay, I doubt whether Sir Gratian Roxborough, or his son, or any other pig-headed tory of my acquaintance would not have abated

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a jot his love of absolutism, after witnessing the evils inflicted upon the poor peasants compelled to provide horses for the convenience of our journey; and the injury to the common-weal produced by our exemption, and the exemption of all travellers of noble blood, from the tollage or taxation indispensable to the maintenance of public roads.

I suppose it was to divert my attention from the nakedness of the land, that Zriny composed my spirits by the most delicious Turkish tobacco I ever smoked, and a series of anecdotes as wild as if invented by Hoffman:—national legends that might have put to the blush the wildest imaginings of our bogs or highlands. Once indeed, when, as we approached a village we were accosted, I might almost say attacked, by a troop of half-naked *Zigeuner*, he observed: "this must remind you of Ireland? In many things, our poor vice-regalized kingdom only too strongly resembles Ireland!" But in general he seemed to take no heed of the defeatures and deficiences of the land of his fathers.

But as he had visited England so as to be

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fully cognizant of the luxurious refinement of our Belvoirs and Goodwoods, and yet abstained as we approached his father's estate from saying; "You must not expect to find at Lyarák, the comfort of your English *vie de château*," I fully prepared myself for a grand mansion of freestone, largely supplied with hunting-stables, stair-carpets, new novels and fish sauces, according to the approved pattern of Wrottesley Hall or Hawley Chase.

Never, however, since my disappointment at Crowsden Grange, had I found myself more out in my calculations! Lyarák was an enormous building of whitewashed brick, standing in a moat, and strongly resembling a county Bridewell, before Bridewell architecture became a matter of prizes and premiums. Occupying three sides of a square, the central court was of loose sandy shingle; nor, for some acres round the house, was a tree higher than a furze-bush to be seen.

For protection against the *feræ naturæ* of those vast hunting grounds, the environs of the house were "cleared" in a style a Kentuckian would have applauded!

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A walled garden with a single small and ill-built forcing-house, constituted the pleasance. Beyond, all was plain and forest, forest and plain, interspersed with hamlets, inhabited by the keepers and trackers of Prince Zriny; who, as far as the eye could reach, exercised autocratic authority.

Within what, by the courtesy of the country, was called a Castle, all was as barrack-like as without. Ill-painted wainscot and ill-whitewashed walls, ornamented here and there with ill-proportioned bas-reliefs whitewashed or rather yellow-washed like the rest, pervaded the vast mansion; with the exception of the state-rooms, hung with faded damask, and scantily filled with meagre furniture of the last century. An enormous hall, on whose walls trophies of antlers and boars' heads were divided by gun-racks and stands of arms, occupied the central ground-floor, and admitted the winds of Heaven to the vast staircase and roomy corridors above; the floors of which seemed to have been guiltless of scrubbing brush or dry-rubbing brush, for as many centuries as the house had been standing.

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Even in the state apartments, with the exception of a small sitting-room called by Princess Zriny her boudoir, not a carpet was to be seen; and as a breezy October had now set in, I felt so strongly on my arrival, the want of such comforts or of a fire to supersede them, that I contrived to ascertain from the seneschal or groom of the chambers that, of thirty bed-chambers, only six were *pièces à feu.* Intended for summer residence, the châteaux of nearly the whole continent will be found in a similar predicament.

I had already begun to grumble at not having been warned to prepare myself with fleecy hosiery for Lyarák, as for an Arctic expedition; when, on assembling for the first day's dinner, the primitive but noble style of hospitality of the old Prince impressed me with a wholly new view of the place. I forgot that there were no bells in the house,—I forgot the shivering operation of my toilet,—on seeing the great fire-place of the grand old hall piled up with blazing logs that might have roasted a baron of beef; while sconces along the walls sent forth the solemn gleam of a succession of

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huge tapers, calculated to do honour to a cathedral.

The servants in attendance were about as numerous as the guests,—who were above thirty in number; and being chiefly heyducks, wearing the uniform of their respective masters, they imparted an almost military aspect to the Hall. With respect to the banquet, served in ponderous dishes of silver like every thing else at Lyarák sadly wanting in polish and evidently unconscious of the touch of a plate brush, it was of a somewhat Homerian nature; and brought forcibly to my mind the line of Pope,

Give me, ye gods! a whole hog barbecued!

Such monstrous fishes from the river Theiss, —such joints of beef and boar,—such wild turkeys and capercailzies,—such covies of partridges and leashes of pheasants!—

Between the strangely accoutred domestics in attendance, the noise of the guests redoubled by a domed ceiling, the flagons of Ofener wine as bright as a ruby, and Nessmühler as clear as a chrysolite, served in sufficient abundance to float the hall, I could have almost fancied myself

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assisting at some festival of the middle ages, held at the court of the Dukes of Burgundy or Matthias Corvinus.

There needed not, however, a nobler presence to preside over the repast than that of Prince Zriny, the grey-haired father of my friend; by whom I was welcomed with open arms, as a stranger within his gates introduced there by his beloved Anton. The Princess, fifty years of age, and consequently more than thirty his junior, differed little from the *grandes dames* of other countries.—Having been treated by her husband, from the time of their marriage, as a child compared with himself, she had some excuse for still deporting herself as a young woman; though the presence of her three handsome daughters might have suggested to a wiser mind, that the time was come for covering her hair with a coif and her shoulders with a shawl. The two eldest, indeed, married to Hungarian nobles of the highest descent, had already assumed a more matronly aspect than herself. But it was for the sake of the youngest, the bewitching Princess Crescentia, that I felt vexed

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to notice so much that was risible in the *minauderies* of the superannuated coquette.

"I present you to my sister Crescentia," had been my friend Anton's unceremonious introduction as we were awaiting, in the dim old carpetless saloon, the announcement of dinner; "who, having never seen a live Englishman before, is naturally curious to ascertain whether you resemble the great Marlbrook, or wear turned-down collars like Byron. Be kind enough to talk a little English to her at dinner, when you must sit by her side, and as near my father as you can;—for, as his spoiled child, he is miserable when she is out of his sight."

"You speak English then?" said I, eagerly addressing the lovely girl whose cheeks were suffused by a vivid blush by her brother's abruptness.

"Don't ask her,—of course her modesty will say no!" cried Anton, patting her affectionately on the shoulder.—"But if she can't, it is to the eternal disgrace of her English master who, as long as I can remember, has never been many days out of our house."

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And speak it I found she did ; not with the fluency of Albertine, but with a discretion that showed the literature of the language to be familiar to her ; thus creating an unacknowledged tie between us which rendered me far more at home with *her* than with others of the party.

After dinner, from the dessert of which, (though rendered a little uproarious by the joy of Anton's unexpected arrival, and the consequent ceremony of toasts,) the men and women rose together, we repaired to the saloon ; and half an hour afterwards, a band of less than *médiocre* musicians, attired in the Prince's uniform, struck up a polonaise as the signal for parading in couples round the great hall, already cleared from the remnants of the feast, up the grand staircase, along the half-lighted corridors and down again ; either by way of exercise to assist our digestion, or as an opening for the ball.

As a matter of course, I danced with Princess Crescentia, who waltzed as Austrians and Hungarians alone can waltz ; and when one of her brothers-in-law, Count Zichy, took her

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from my arm for a single turn, I had an opportunity of admiring as a spectator the light steadiness of her step as well as the extreme grace of her figure. A long swan-like throat, and the smallest head I ever saw bound round with simple bands of hair as black as jet, assigned her a far more distinguished appearance than the most fashionable of the fair *Parisiennes* whom, at Baden, I had pronounced supreme.

But what charmed me in the young Princess still more than her beauty, was the total absence of art in her words, movements, and ideas. Mrs. Hawley was an unaffected woman. But in *her* deportment you could trace the influence of early care and deference to the caprices of others. You could not converse with her without perceiving that, at one time or other, she had resided under an alien roof, or among those of whose kindness she was not perfectly assured: whereas Crescentia was like a flower such as one sees expand in some sequestered spot; with nothing but sunshine overhead,—nothing but shelter and security around. Whatever she said or did, was pre-

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assured of approval. Instead of the varied intonation which imparts to a woman not sure of herself and others, an appearance of hypocrisy, I doubt whether Princess Crescentia Zriny ever altered the tone of her voice to address any mortal breathing. Save when on her knees to Heaven, what ear was there which it behoved her to propitiate!

"You must not fall in love with my little sister, my dear Rott'slie!" said Prince Anton, drawing me laughingly aside by my coat sleeve, on noticing the moonstruck air with which I stood gazing on her flying footsteps. "In the first place, because she is affianced to a nephew of my mother,—the owner of the most glorious stud and finest *puszta* in Hungary;—in the second, because, even if free, my father is so wildly on horseback upon his nationality, that I believe he would rather see any one of his children made into mincemeat, than married to a foreigner,—no matter of what country or rank,—royal, serene, or simple. The Emperor of Russia himself would sue in vain for the hand of one of my sisters."

"A feeling which I honour!" cried I. "You

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must be proud to feel yourself the son of one of the last patriots of Hungary."

"I would fain have abated his patriotism a trifle three weeks ago, however," cried Anton, "when within a hair's-breadth of falling in love with Mélanie de Bonval; and kept clear of the scrape only by endeavouring to fancy every time I approached her, an effigy of my father set up as a sort of scare-cupid between us."

"*You* in love with Mélanie de Bonval?" I exclaimed, as if waking from a trance.

"*Noch ein!*" exclaimed he, shrugging his shoulders. "Why not I, as well as the rest.—From the moment you nearly broke your neck in birdsnesting, however, I recovered the infinitesimal morsel of my heart of which she had robbed me. The heartless manner in which I saw her coquetting with D'Estomont—"

"With Stormont—"

"With S t o r m o n t, (is that right?) effected my cure at once. But, to return to my sister Cressy.—I informed her when I presented you to her before dinner, that you were passionately in love with a countrywoman of your own, (as you owned to me after a third bottle of cham-

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pagne t'other night at Munich) and you therefore know to what to attribute her unreserve. She looks upon you as a married man."

Though I considered Zriny officiously prompt in his announcement, it would have been ungrateful to quarrel with what procured me such gracious attentions on the part of his sister.

We had not talked together ten minutes, before Princess Crescentia approached and interrupted us.

"Dear darling Anton!" said she, "you are come just in time to procure me the enjoyment of a little shooting. All summer, at Mehádia, papa promised me that, if we spent the *saison de chasse* at Lyarák, I should have a day sometimes with the pheasants; and Rodolph Zichy has brought me a present of the two most beautiful little pointers you ever saw; which look as if they had escaped from a mousetrap.—But when I wanted to go out and try them yesterday with the light gun you sent me over from England, mamma would not hear of it!—She says my brothers-in-law are too thoughtless to take care of me,—that our party,

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just now, is too large,—that they seldom go out without some accident."

"All which is perfectly true, my little Cressy! You have nothing left for it but patience."

"Surely you could manage to take me into the home-woods to-morrow, just for a shot or two,—just to try the dogs and gun,—before the rest of the party are on foot?"—

"Impossible, my dear child!—I am to introduce Rott'slie, to-morrow, to the gallant sport of boar-hunting."

Though a little shocked at the idea of a sporting young lady,—a Miss Nimrod,—a *Diane chasseresse* on a miniature scale,—no sooner did Crescentia turn her expressive eyes beseechingly towards me for assistance, than I endeavoured to further her views.

"If *I* am the only obstacle, my dear Anton," said I,—"if it be only to amuse *me* you have ordered out the hounds —"

"My dear fellow," he retorted, "if our diversions are to be secondary to the whims and fancies of a little puss like this, we had better take to the distaff at once! But make your

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mind easy. The order of the day is decreed; and, having received my father's *imprimatur*, is as the law of the Medes and Persians. The trackers have got their instructions. Preparations have been made at the *rendez-vous de chasse*. Poor Cressy must settle her differences with the powers that be, as best she may."

And the following morning,—a fine October day, that lighted up the woods into burnished gold without destroying the bracing influence of the atmosphere,—when I found myself mounted on one of the finest horses of the far-famed Lyarák stables, accoutred from the Prince's armoury, and following a pack of boar-hounds which Theseus himself might have been proud to own, in company with my friend Anton Zriny and his brothers-in-law, Zichy and Keglovies, I could not help admitting, in the excitement of the moment, that women are sadly out of place where field-sports are going on; and that, except to weep over the catastrophe of an Adonis, even Venus herself is better at home.

I am not going to write up "Boar-hunting," as a rival to "Deer-stalking," or the "Rod and

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Gun." Having neither Snyders nor Landseer to illustrate my art of venery, I leave the field of sportsmanship to Mr. Poulett Scrope. Still, I should like my readers to enter a little into my emotions while enjoying in the most brilliant style one of the noblest,—nay, *the* noblest, because the most classical,—of the sports of the field; and understand my triumph when, the only person except Count Zichy in at the death of the tusky monster, the *couteau de chasse* was presented to me for the honour of giving the *coup de grâce.*

How scornfully on my return to England should I lift myself above the head of Charley Roxborough, by the right of recounting such exploits! How proudly should I relate in Yorkshire the mysteries of such a field, and describe the grim ferocity of the brindled *wild-schwein!* Nor did I fail to contrast the generous hospitality with which the honours of the chase were decreed to the stranger,—the best horse allotted to him, and the best position assigned,—with the different system I had seen practised by Roxborough at the Elms; where the keepers invariably reserved for their young

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master the best ground and best dogs, and then shouted in honour of the weight of his game-bag, as though the consequence of his being a crack-shot.

Still more disagreeably was I forced to contrast his conduct with that of my foreign friends, when a week spent in their company enabled me to judge of their dealings at the card-table, at billiards, or wherever the chances of the moment were made the subject of a bet. There was something so high-toned, so chivalrous, so loyal in their avoidance of all advantage founded on my youth and rashness! I could get no one to take up the bets I offered; and I *now* perfectly understood the disgust with which Anton Zriny had contemplated in England the specious knaveries of the turf.

Animated by this cordial hospitality to a far higher standard of spirits than my wont, I was already beginning to find the day too short to enjoy the company and strive to recommend myself to the smiles of Princess Crescentia, and the night too short to dream of having obtained them, — a necessary preliminary towards the construction of new Castles in the Air. But

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there was *one* person who discerned far less charm than I did in the scenery and social system of Hungary. My courier, who acted also as my valet,—a treasure of a man, accustomed to the convenience of a London hotel,—took occasion to signify one morning, when I complained of the varnish of my boots, that if I intended to remain much longer at Lyarák, he would thank me to "give him his discharge."

On our first arrival, I had turned a deaf ear to his complaint of having to sleep with fifty other slaveys in a common dormitory, each prison-wise, with his mattress and rug; or rather, had silenced him by proving, on his own admission, that Prince Zriny's servants were accommodated in the same manner,—the mattress and rug being replaced by straw. But a fortnight spent in a duet of grumbling with Urbain, Anton's fribble of a French valet, in the land where, though serfhood is legally abolished, servitude is the bitterest of slavery, had chilled the very marrow in his bones. He had seen one of Prince Zriny's heyducks scourged for intoxication, stretched upon an iron table in

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the court-yard of the offices, under the authority of the Ekonom or house-steward. He had seen the chasseur of Prince Ferdinand Chorinsky *minus* an ear,—sliced off by a sabre-cut from a former master, a Transylvanian magnat; and both he and Urbain were beginning to tremble in their skins at the notion of the horrors to which they might be exposed by some involuntary act of insubordination.

"They say, Sir, in the house," whispered he in a tremulous voice, "that the old Prince, for as venerable and benevolent as he looks, is worse than a Turk when his blood is up. The reason Prince Anton is so fond of roving about the world,—no matter whether England, France, or Spain,—is because the brutal ways of Hungary make his blood boil. Princess Crescentia's maid was saying to me (confidentially) t'other night, that notwithstanding the fondness of her parents, who encourage her, poor young lady, in all her kitten's tricks, if she was only to go contrary to their will in the merest trifle,—such as wanting to marry against their choice, or what not,—the old Prince would make no more

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of walling her up in one of the old turrets, than of hanging her terrier."

I saw the drift of his hint. During his service at table, he had doubtless noticed my attentions to the charming young Princess, and the graciousness with which they were accepted. And, having often occasion to bring me letters in the handwriting of one or other of my sisters, which to an unobservant eye would appear the same, I doubtless passed in his eyes for an engaged man, who was dishonestly fooling away his hours of absence with one he was not likely to make his wife.

I was beginning a stern homily on the unadvised presumption with which servants presume to decide upon the conduct and motives of their masters, when lo! a tap at my chamber door.—The Vienna post was arrived; and Urbain, despatched by his master, placed three letters in my hand, bearing the post-mark of the country I was using my best endeavours to forget!

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CHAPTER IV.

Every man was free to follow
  Bird or wild beast to his den;
Every man maintained his guard
  With the sword and not the pen.
Manly thoughts and simple habits
  Brought him health and banished pain;
There was freedom in the forest,—
  There was plenty on the plain.

BARRY CORNWALL.

THE forbearance of my good guardian was inexhaustible as the bounty of Heaven. My accident and illness at Baden, of which an exaggerated account had somehow or other reached his ears, seemed to have melted towards me the momentary hardening of his heart. His utmost displeasure was exhibited in a gentle remonstrance against my persevering confidence in so worthless a son, brother, and friend as Charles

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Roxborough. As to my remissness concerning the execution of his commission in Paris, I was sufficiently punished he said, in the loss of so many months of Mrs. Hawley's acquaintance. For already, though at the time of his writing but a week or two established at the Chase, she had fully justified the warmth of my praises. He spoke of her as she deserved, as grace and loveliness itself.

"I can now imagine," said he, "what it must have cost my poor Wrottesley to quit a world endeared to him by the affection of such an angel. But our regrets, alas! cannot recal him; and all that remains for me is to cheer the young existence he left so forlorn. In this task, my dear boy, I look to *you* for assistance. Since it appears that your pursuits on the continent are not of a much more prudent nature than those against which I had occasion to warn you in this country, the sooner you return to us the better. You ought to be on the spot, to superintend the preparations for your coming of age."

The second letter was from Gripham;—informing me, that if in want of money for my

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journey home, a second letter of credit similar to the last, was at my disposal; "for that Sir Robert Hawley appeared to have set his heart on my speedy return." And the tone of his letter was so deferential, and so different from his usual style of correspondence, that I began to suspect he was in the secret of Sir Robert's designs in my favour.

Though not on terms with me to justify a remark beyond the red ink line of pounds, shillings, and pence that bound us together, he could not forbear alluding to the sensation produced in the neighbourhood by Mrs. Hawley's arrival.

"The old gentleman," wrote Gripham, "has been quite another creature since she came; and between the cheerfulness she is creating at the Chase, and the spirited goings-on of the noble couple at Roxborough Elms, you will, I trust, Sir, find your life at Wrottesley Hall a very different thing from what it used to be. Already, people are beginning to talk of Mrs. Hawley's settling permanently in Yorkshire. Sir Robert is said to have determined, in case she should

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marry an Englishman, and to his liking, to make them heirs to his estate."

An Englishman, indeed! As if *the* Englishman were not already fixed upon.

My third letter, subscribed with a *paraphe* of C. E. R., graced with as many and as convulsive flourishes as an autograph of George Cruikshank (though connected with far less pleasureable associations,) contained a cool intimation on the part of Charley Roxborough, that, if he heard nothing from me to the contrary, he should take a few friends with him in December to Wrottesley Hall, to enjoy a fortnight's pheasant shooting.

"It is an extreme inconvenience to me," wrote he,—as though the inconvenience were of *my* creating, "to be cut out of my winter shooting at the Elms. Those who are accustomed to look to me for their amusement at this season of the year, seem to think themselves aggrieved; and I trust, my dear Wrottesley, you will assist me in my dilemma. Do not distress yourself about our finding things out of order. I shall take down the old *sous-*

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chef from Watier's, who happens to be out of place; and with the aid of the keepers, your old hobble-de-gee of a Nicholls, and the freedom of the cellar, I dare say we shall get on pretty well."

No more allusion to the appeal contained in my last letter, or to Tom Whichcote, than if no such place as Rainham existed!—

He *did*, however, condescend to inform me that the "own brother to Marmaduke," had got a strain at the Houghton Meeting; but that, before the thing was blown, he had "managed to get rid of him to Tom Mackey, Fortrose's brother, who had just taken to the turf, knowing scarcely so much as the difference between a horse and a mule; and who, like other greenhorns, must pay for his schooling."

That night, as I sat carousing with Zriny and his friends, who were planning a wolf-hunting excursion to Szent Miklós, (an estate belonging to the Prince in Transylvania,) and discussing men, women, and things, with a degree of freedom, which can only exist among men of the same age and rank in life I could not refrain from a secret comparison, between

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the bluntness of my new friends, and the blandness of the hollow and circumspect Charley. Like him, the young fellows I was living with, loved horses and play, wine and women. But they prized their horses for their use and beauty, —not to drive a trade with them,—cards for the excitement of the moment, not from mere covetousness of gold,—wine, as a promoter of sociability,—and women, as an embellishment of life. The idea of eschewing wine for tea or coffee that they might be a better match at the card-table for their less sober friends, or of employing women as an influence to captivate those over whom it was eligible to obtain an ascendancy, was a baseness of which they were incapable. Not one of them but would have cut off his right hand, ere he stooped to Charles Roxborough's money-dealing equivocations; or connived in the subterfuges which tarnish many a well accredited transaction on the turf. Several were younger brothers, of families where the existence of a *majorat* renders younger brotherhood as starving a condition as in Great Britain. Several were wretchedly out at elbows. But sooner would they have run the gauntlet of

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Austrian discipline as common soldiers, than enrich themselves by the ignoble gains which have converted certain of our *cadets de famille* into men of fortune.

In all this, and the out-spoken cordiality of their nature, there was something inexpressibly attractive. I felt naturalized in their company, rather than a passing stranger admitted to a share of their bread and salt. In the hospitality of Lyarák was exhibited the feudal frankness which takes thought neither of to-day nor to-morrow:—the man of sufficient degree to break bread with the Zrinys, being for the time as of their kith and kin.

It was partly the fascination of an order of things so new to me,—a life as of an Arab horde,—and partly, I am afraid, my fickleness of nature, which inspired the utmost repugnance towards the summons of Sir Robert. I, who, only two months before, had felt that the travelling carriage which bore the beautiful Albertine from the Rue de Rivoli, was bearing away the sunshine of my life, could think of her now only as an amiable young woman making tea for a formal old gentleman in an

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easy chair, with the urn smoking between them, and a coal fire smoking opposite; dull questions and dry answers being fired at intervals, like minute guns, to prove to each that, though nodding, neither was asleep. The idea of becoming a third partner in this drowsy firm was so little inviting, that the Albertine of Hawley Chase appeared a different being from the ingratiating hostess of *Les Epines*; and I turned from a Castle in the Air so cheerless as the faded, dreary, mildewed drawing-room of my good old guardian, to clap my hands for joy at the sight of the blazing hearth at Lyarák, and the sounds of song and mirth echoing in its lordly hall:—

> Laughing, quaffing,—blusterous weather,
> Winds and rain defied together,—
> Friendship glowing,—wine a flowing,—
> Wit beyond the proser's knowing,—

knit up into the charm of social fellowship.

For *there* jested my friend Anton, and *there* smiled the beautiful Crescentia; and when the old Prince called me to his side to talk about England and tell me how he had been at college at Brunswick with the royal uncles of my King;

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while the Princess inquired with jealous eagerness whether Princess Esterhazy, despite a grown-up daughter really passed for nearly the handsomest woman at the court of George IV., and on my answering in the affirmative, observed with a sigh that "there was nothing she so ardently desired as to visit England," I took their compliments to myself.—Were confirmation wanting to the proverb that a man is never a prophet in his own country, I should have found it in the *hauteur* manifested towards me by Lady Northamsted and her daughter,—of the Marquis of Clanalbin and Lord John Jocelyn,—compared with the overwhelming graciousness of the Zrinys.

Had I been as experienced as Charley Roxborough in the luxury of the best English country-houses, with Badminton, Belvoir and Bretby at my fingers' ends, I might perhaps have taken it into my head to be fastidious concerning the rough accommodations of the old hunting-seat. My courier never let a day pass without observing that a dozen well-trained servants would have done more honour to the Prince's establishment than the regiment

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of banditti by whom he was surrounded. But as it was literally the first housekeeping I had seen on a princely scale, instead of being disposed to find fault, I began already to dream of placing Wrottesley Hall on a similar footing. The butts of wine were to be ale, indeed; and the bucks roasted whole were to be Southdowns. —But I would have the same roughness and readiness; the same absence of mahogany and varnish,—of damask and satin.

After all, how out of place the city-luxury of our country-seats, in the midst of the woods and forests! What so adapted to the requirements of country life, as a spacious hall, for the alternate purposes of feasting, dancing, and music;—not too richly furnished under foot for the comings and goings of favourite dogs, from the huge mastiff or St. Bernard, down to the doleful-visaged spaniel, the tears of whose race are said to flow without ceasing for the fate of their royal patron King Charles;—or the Skye terrier such as Breughel has placed at the feet of Adam and Eve in Paradise in his famous picture at Amsterdam,—(Breughel de Vlour, dear public, from the place of his birth, not

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Breughel de Velours or "velvet Breughel," from the smoothness of his pencil, as you choose to blunder into supposing,) and such as Anton had placed on the lap of his sister ;—nor too richly painted overhead, to be injured by the fumes of meerschaum or cigar.

Instead of the little fiddle-faddle *entrées* and *hors-d'œuvres* served by the *chef* at Glenhama, and savoured and applauded by Charles Roxborough and Fortrose as inquiringly as though they were pastry-cook's apprentices or the salaried tasters of a royal household, I would have honest sirloins and lordly haunches, multiplied as the number of my guests might require ;—coveys of partridges, flights of wild fowl, and shoals of fish. All should be on the scale of the famous recipe given to Lady Holland at Florence for making Parmesan cheese: "Take the milk of a hundred cows." My hospitality should throw into the shade even the old True Blue, open-house, system of Courtfield of Courtfield Manor. Even the hospitality of Lord Meadowley, renowned for doing the duty of a county member by a perpetual round of feasting worthy the patriarchs or King Priam,—

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should show by comparison like the dietary of an union workhouse.

But of this palace of plenty and simplicity, who was to be the queen? I might find substitutes for the barbecued deer and hogsheads of Ofener. But where was I to find a representative of Crescentia? What English young lady of high degree, educated by a model governess and got up by a pattern lady's maid, would be capable of doing the honours of my house to half a hundred guests, without fancying that she provided sufficiently for their entertainment by the lustre of her jewels and white satin, and the clatter of her Moscheles and Thalberg?

I was beginning seriously to commune within myself by what possible process of self-effacement I could sufficiently Hungarianize my nature to find favour in the eyes of the old Prince, in order to obtain the hand of a bride who would, I flattered myself, take the shine out of Lady John Jocelyn and Mrs. Hawley of Hawley Chase; when lo! the appointed day arrived for our start into Transylvania; and never was I more amused than by watching the unavowed struggle in the mind of the wretched

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Felix; between his dread of going to be hunted with dogs or have his ears sliced like lemons by some Hermannstadt Nero, (like the victims who had confided to him their wrongs,) if he accompanied me to Szent Miklós; and a vague apprehension that the Prince would order him to be scourged as unconcernedly as one of his own heyducks, during my absence, if he remained behind, should any thing like rebellion appear to afford a dangerous precedent for the Helots of Lyarák.

The first moment we were alone, he attempted to bluster out a declaration that "he had engaged himself at the desire of Sir Robert Hawley, Baronet, (who had promised in return to use his interest in procuring him a King's messenger's place) to accompany me on my travels through France and Germany—Hungary *not* included. No! there was never the smallest mention of Hungary; and sooner than undertake a journey among such a set of savages as the Slavacks, who went about like wild Ingins with hatchets stuck in their belts, and were such thieves that they'd strip a carriage of its leathers and linings if left in an open coach-

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house, unless a watchman and lantern sat up with it all night,—sooner (he begged to say) than risk his precious life among such cut-throats—"

The orator paused; for Anton Zriny and Zichy at that moment entered my dressing-room to settle our hour for starting; and well knowing in what awe he stood of the Magyar magnats on ground where their nod was law and gospel, I insisted on his finishing his sentence. But Felix, in spite of his portly bearing and huge whiskers, was struck dumb by the force of his own imagination; and as he stood behind me, opposite the huge old Venice looking-glass, I saw that his face was white as ashes. It was only in pity to his beseeching looks I let him off the exposure of his panic.

Not a little were his agonies increased, however, by learning at the final settlement of our *plan de campagne*, that he was to abide at Lyarák till our return.

Owing to the difficulty of finding horses after quitting Hermannstadt,—a day's journey from which, on the frontier of Moldavia and the Bannat, lay Szent Miklós, the estate where our

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feats were to be performed,—it was settled that only Zichy's valet and the head Jager of Prince Zriny, (who, as Hungarians born and speaking the language, could be of good service,) should attend us; packed into the rumble of the clumsy *kutsch* or berline which was to contain the humble servant of the reader, Anton Zriny, Zichy, and a certain Count Engelbert something or other, their intimate friend, who had arrived the preceding night.

Again did poor Felix cast towards me an imploring look. But I took care to inform him so explicitly in presence of the major domo of Lyarák, that "he must abide my return in readiness to start with Prince Anton and myself for Paris," that, unless he had seen fit to make a moonlight flitting of it, and start across the fields to trudge back a hundred miles to Pesth bearing two heavy portmanteaus on his shoulders, it would have been as hard a matter to effect his escape, as from Spielberg or the Millbank Penitentiary. Accustomed to the insolence of Cambridge grooms and London valets, who, if worth having, contrive to render their services a torment as well as a favour, it was a treat to

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see my giant of six feet two brought so completely on his knees.

We were to start at daybreak:—a chill November morning; and yet I felt warm to the heart's core,—thanks not so much to the dolman and cap lined with sables with which I had provided myself at Pesth, as to my parting from the Zriny family the night before: when, taking the benefit of the customs of the country, I had not scrupled to press my lips to the withered hand of the Princess and the "bluest veins" of Crescentia, as I saw done by my fellow-travellers. Their good wishes for our journey and sport, in return, seemed to my jealous vanity more especially addressed to *me* than to the rest; and I had already made up my mind to take Anton into my confidence ere we returned to Lyarák, and ascertain whether the sale of my property in England, the renunciation of my faith and country, the addition of mustachios to my face and a "sky" or "y" to my name, would induce his noble parents to over look my short-comings and the claims of the betrothed nephew.

Our journey was what men call delightful,

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so long as the glowing blood of youth is dancing in their veins. Furred to the chin like Laplanders, we smoked like Turks; and when the chill and clammy air admitted by the open windows hung in concentrated drops upon our whiskers, the travelling-cup of the silver cognac-flask was unscrewed, and passed round; and for the next hour, there ensued between our cigars an interlude of evil-speaking, lying, and slandering, during which such of the fairest and haughtiest dames of Paris, London, and Vienna, as chanced to remain unmentioned, might consider themselves in luck.

By degrees, the effects of ardent spirits, or the narrative genius of the scandal-mongers, became exhausted; and as their histories grew decent and prosy, the pleasure of dozing succeeded to that of boasting and belying; and when roused up by occasional collision with some huge fragment of rock left in the middle of the road,—such as, macadamized, would have mended the roads of the whole comitat, but over which our vehicle, after contending with it ferociously for a minute or two, effected a saltatory scramble,—they betook themselves once more

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in succession to cigars, schnapps, scandal, and a snooze, to recommence with scandal, schnapps, and cigars.

The readiest at the latter pastime was my friend Anton; the readiest at the silver bottle, his brother-in-law; the most eager smoker of the party, because the least experienced, was myself. But in point of what in the *argol* of Paris is called *blague*, (and the French have an unquestionable right to invent a name for an art of their invention) was Count Engelbert; whose patronymic I then knew not,—and now that I know it, have especial reasons for keeping to myself.

Thanks to his inordinate bragging, which as compared with that of the most boastful idler of the Boulevart de Gand, was as a pair of seven league boots to an omnibus, I learned that he was the bosom friend of Reginald Stormont. Together, they had eaten fire, and ground the bones of tender females to make them bread, in three quarters of the globe,—Europe, Asia, and Africa. The roses of Damascus, the pomegranates of Granada, the acacias of Paris, had crowned their brows as with triumphal laurels.

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The balconies from which they had dropped, the silken ladders by which they had ascended, the injured husbands by whom they had been defied in single combat, the indignant fathers by whom they had been dogged with bravi and stiletti, —would have made the fortune of the most peppery *feuilleton* going, and filled the sixteen volumes of a catastrophic romance by Dumas, or a panoramic novel by Sue; and I sat staring at him in stupid wonderment, like some sun-scorched Arab on one of the professional tale-tellers of the East.

There was one story he related, of which Stormont and not himself was the hero; which as it befel in Italy four years before, and an English family was mixed up with some of its most offensive details, I would have given worlds to have known how to pique him into elucidating by the names of the parties. For, sorely against my will, I could not help fancying that Albertine and her mother, and Wrottesley Hawley and his father, formed part of the *dramatis personæ*. Had some opportune mass of rock lain just then in our way, so as to jolt up my friend Anton out of his sleep, I could

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have easily insinuated into his mind misgivings concerning the fair niece of his friend the Comtesse de Valmoré, so as to prompt his eager nature into inquiries not to be evaded. But towards me, from the moment of our introduction, Count Engelbert had assumed an air of superiority and patronage so galling, that I would on no account place myself at the disadvantage of risking a question to which he could refuse a reply.

Provoking confirmation was yielded, moreover, to the justifiability of his self-assumptions, by the favour with which every female eye, wherever we halted for refreshment, rested on his audacious face and handsome proportions. When he threw off, with careless but masterly execution and a voice as ringing as Zucchelli's, a few bars of one of Rossini's *chefs-d'œuvre*, they crowded the corridor to listen; or if he wanted a light for his cigar, rushed about in search of it as though willing to burn the house down to afford him a match. I had consequently double reason for resenting the consequential air by which he tried to sink me into my boots, as a poor, harmless lad just escaped

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from college, who might perhaps be made something of when he had lived ten or a dozen years in the world, and learned the slang of the *bal de l'opéra*, and the art of whipping into *créme fouettée* the rich heaviness of *la créme de la créme*.

At Szent Miklós, where we were lodged, indifferently enough, in the house of the Prince's intendant,—the chief mansion of a hamlet where, with the exception of the priest and the Prince's forest-and-mine inspectors, not a soul could read or write,—I discovered that, in a positive as well as proverbial sense, "*toujours perdrix ne vaut rien.*" We had literally nothing to eat but game, washed down by the richest Hungarian wines; and an incursion of our neighbours the Turks would scarcely have sufficed to rouse us from the heavy slumbers succeeding the savoury feasts and heady potations that crowned the hard day's chase.

But oh! the excitement of that chase; the grandeur of those virgin forests; and the feudal dignity of having villages and villages for trackers;—all glorying to render service and homage to the pride of the Magyars,—a

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son of the house of Zriny! The picturesque costume of the women,—the warlike aspect of the men,—the outlandishness (if so plebeian a word may stand its ground in a printed book) of the whole concern, made me look back on the tameness of my native sports with pity and contempt. While Zriny, Zichy, and Count Engelbert would probably have given all the wolf-hunting they were ever likely to enjoy, for a single week at Melton or with the Pytchley. I was infatuated by the daring exploits of a field whose triumphs depend far more on the daring of the man, than the fleetness or vigour of his horse. And then to compare a victory over poor pug with the glory of bringing home at your saddle-bow one of those grinning monsters whose ferocity is nowhere held in higher apprehension than by the proprietors of the enormous sheep-walks of the Hungarian *pusztas*.

The *Ekonomicus*, who was careful to keep up a pack of the finest wolf hounds extant on the Moldavian frontier, not so much for the sake of a sport which he regarded as waste of time as for the defence of the farms of Prince

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Zriny, was not a little overjoyed by the avidity of our search after what *he* regarded as beasts of prey for extermination. I even thought, at one time, he was going to offer us the price placed by the Comitat on the head of every wolf,—so much for males,—so much for females,—so much for cubs. But when, at the close of our third day's sport, Count Engelbert was so lucky as to be in at the death of a splendid bear which the dogs had incidentally started, the worthy man would fain have embraced the noble *chasseur* who had rid the neighbourhood of so mischievous a devastator.

"No, no, my good Sir!" cried the Count, in answer to his proposal for leave to forward the head to Bisztricz, the chief town of the county. "I mean to take back the skin in triumph to Vienna. I shall have it arranged to make a *descente de lit* for the lady of my heart."

"For that, you need not go further than Lyarák," was Anton's careless rejoinder. "My father's huntsmen are the most capital fur-dressers I know."

A horrible suspicion that the bear-skin was intended as a trophy for the feet of Princess

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Crescentia, made me regret at that moment, that the conqueror of its rich raven-haired fur were not lying at the mercy of the hounds by whom it was run down.

I really believe it prospered the fellow for me to hate him as I did! Whatever might be the sport of the day,—small game or large,—ptarmigan, bustard, partridge, wild boar, deer, or wolf,—Count Engelbert had all the luck! I do not mean to deny that he was an expert sportsman. But chance must have had *some* hand in allotting him a share of the sport such as amazed even the jägers and iron-heeled peasants of the frontier.

There was something less than courteous in his manner of parading these triumphs over the head of a stripling like myself. Was it my fault that the higher civilization of England affords no experience in running down the bear or wolf? And if eight hours on foot among the thorny thickets of Szent Miklós, or ten hours in the saddle, proved sometimes too much for me, so that but for the *raki* liberally administered from the gourds of the jägers or foresters I should have found it a hard matter

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to reach home with the rest,—be it remembered that my early habits of life had been far less invigorating than those of a Hungarian magnat, who, according to the proverb of the country, is born on horseback.

And Count Engelbert was Magyar to the back-bone!—daring, reckless, rash, despotic, selfish,—yet contriving to tone down these defects under a brilliant varnish of valour and patriotism. In another century, he would have had sword incessantly in hand and spur on heel, for the defence of that native land of which he was proud to be the son; but whose sons, his brethren, he was apt to treat like niggers. Were I to recount the scenes of brutality I saw exercised in the course of that Transylvanian hunting party, and the tyrannies practised upon the vassals whom Anton would not permit me to call serfs, seeing that serfhood has long been abolished in Hungary, I should describe a state of things such as may have existed in England in William Rufus's time, under sanction of the forest laws, and pass for an ungrateful monster throwing a brand of discord upon the hearth which accorded me hospitality. But this I *will* say; that if the

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adjacent provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia afforded proof of a more Turk-like tyranny,—I am a Dutchman!

I have bitterly repented since, by the way, that I did not succeed in persuading Prince Anton to accompany me in a few days' scamper across the border; for now that Turkey is unturbaned, and will probably soon become unveiled, it would be something to have obtained a glimpse at its saturnine solemnity ere it ceased to be a portion of the Oriental world. But Zriny and Count Engelbert entertained the true hot-blooded Hungarian scorn of their sherbet-drinking neighbours, and silenced my entreaties at once by the words plague and quarantine:—the diplomatic furlough of the former being so nearly expired, that I had not a moment to lose in feeling my way with him concerning proposals to the Prince and Princess, on our return to Lyarák, where we were to sojourn but a day.

Six weeks only were wanting to the attainment of my majority: a period to which I had looked forward, three years before, as to the coming together of heaven and earth. And

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now it was at hand, fain would I have postponed it; not alone to avoid the crash and clearance of outstanding claims, and the consequent sinking of my state; but because a winter spent at Vienna, (whither at the commencement of January the Zriny family were accustomed to repair from their fine but grim old palace in the fortress of Buda, for the galas of the new year,) appeared the *summum bonum* of human happiness.

The day preceding that which was fixed for our departure from Szent Miklós, I endeavoured to communicate all this to my friend Anton, as we were jogging back from the forest together in a dim twilight and mistling rain. But either from the superabundance of *raki* with which my nervousness and the *Jagd-Meister* had thought proper to prepare me, my speech was nearly as thick as the soil through which we were wading.

I dare say poor Anton thought the moment a strange one for my burst of enthusiasm in favour of Hungary; which I suddenly pronounced to be the richest, noblest, and most favoured of the kingdoms of the earth.

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"Which does not prevent me from wishing," he good-humouredly retorted, "that at this present speaking, the favoured kingdom afforded us *terra firma* free from mud, and an atmosphere free from drizzle. However, I rise in my stirrups to return thanks in the name of Hungaria: and propose, in return, the honourable gentleman's health."

"I am sorry," said I, "you see only matter for a jest in my honest enthusiasm; for I can assure you that the high-minded nobleness of the prince your father, and the frank, high-bred, and chivalrous sentiments of those of his countrymen with whom as his guest I have become acquainted, have produced so strong an impression on my heart, that nothing would make me happier than to settle among them for life."

"My dear fellow,—my dear Rott'slie," said Anton, in undisguised amazement, "are you making a fool of *me*, or of yourself? What on earth would you do in this country—misgoverned and distracted to a point that renders even the most patriotic of her sons absentees? You, with your fine estates and a seat awaiting you in

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parliament, where you may go to sleep over the interests of the nation with the perfect certainty that such a powerful impetus has been imparted to its good government that it will proceed safely and prosperously in its sphere of routine for the next fifty years, without occasion for legislative interference,—you, to hanker after this land of broils and tribulations, where as in your own Ireland, all is heart-burning and strife! You must be fond indeed of fishing in troubled waters!"—

I endeavoured to clear my voice and his understanding, to make him comprehend that my naturalization in Hungary, was to be a means and not an end;—which however I did not accomplish till we neared the lights of Szent Miklós; where, the days being so short, Prince Zriny's people were careful to plant at nightfall blazing pine-torches in the parapet of the terrace surrounding the house of the intendant, as a land-mark to the loiterers of the hunt. But when at last, by stammering out the name of Princess Crescentia, I afforded him a clue to the mystery, he pulled up his horse

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with such vehemence, as to splash me with mud up to my very gorget of deer-skin.

"What the deuce can you mean by such fooling!" said he. "Did ever man but yourself, my dear Rott'slie, dream of digging a well that he might stumble into it headlong?"—

I muttered something about the impossibility of defying our destinies.

"Nonsense, *destinies!*" cried Zriny, pricking on as abruptly as he had reined up. "A man's *will* is his destiny! From the moment he comes to man's estate, his fate is the work of his hand. I went out of my way to apprize you of my sister's engagement; and if you found her attractions too much for you, you should have taken yourself out of hers!"

"As your travelling companion and guest," argued I, a little nettled, "how was I to propose so ungracious a thing as to tear you from Lyarák? At all events, no one but myself is the sufferer from my infatuation!"

"How do you know that?" cried Anton. And for a moment, I flattered myself he was

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aware that his sister's heart experienced *some* leaning towards me. "How the deuce do you know *that*?" he repeated, almost angrily. "If this foolish fancy of yours were to transpire, what might Engelbert think of it all?"—

"Count Engelbert?" I reiterated, aghast.

"Would he not have some reason to apprehend that my sister had been coquetting with you during his absence? Has he not a right to argue that no man in his senses takes so strong a step as you have taken, unless stimulated by great encouragement on the part of the lady? Consider what a life Crescentia might be made to lead, if he intimated his suspicions to her parents; above all, to my mother, of whom he is the favourite nephew!"—

"Do you mean to say," said I, the blood running as cold in my veins as the rain-drops were trickling down my back, "that Count Engelbert is the affianced husband of Princess Crescentia?"—

"Do you pretend that you were *ignorant* of it?" repeated he. "Surely the mode in which you saw them take leave of each other might

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have convinced you that they were betrothed lovers!"

Something between a sigh and a groan was my response; lost probably in the splashing of our horses' feet through the road, which resembled the channel of a brook.

"Though Engelbert is a rattling, noisy fellow," added my friend, as we approached the gate of Szent Miklós, "my sister is warmly attached to him. Brought up together and affianced from childhood, their love has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. They are to be married early in the spring; and last night, I was literally thinking of proposing to you, when you expressed such strong predilections in favour of Hungary, to return with me and be present at their wedding!"

Lucky that, at that moment, there was some one to assist me in dismounting in the little court-yard of the intendancy; for between *raki* and disappointment, my legs seemed to give way under me. I had just presence of mind, as I skulked off to bed on pretence of an over-

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whelming *migraine*, to entreat that my friend Anton would keep the secret of my rash attachment, both from its fair object and Count Engelbert.

But alas! from the uproarious merriment that reached my restless pillow from the hall where the hunters, including one or two Hungarian gentlemen who had joined us from Bisztricz, were carousing below, mingled with hunting-songs, hurrahs, and breaking of glasses, I could not help fearing that Anton might have behaved as Charles Roxborough would certainly have done in his place; and amused the company by the diagnosis of my sudden illness, as caused by an indigestion of unsuccessful love.

How thoroughly disenchanted were my views of Hungary on our way back to Lyarák! A severe frost having set in upon the chilly rain of the preceding night, the road was as slippery as glass;—and though twice the quantity of cigars and Cognac were consumed to lighten our *ennui*, not one of us but cursed in our hearts the inconvenience arising from imperfect civilization—bad roads—bad inns—and no posting. Count Engelbert had all the singing and

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bragging to his own share; and now that I knew to what excitement to attribute the towering nature of his spirits, I could have killed him for the smile which rendered the double row of his handsome teeth a permanent exhibition.

He had no need for reward for consolation! *He* had no inducement to construct Castles in the Air! A paradise pre-ordained for him stood invitingly open; with an angel keeping watch over the gate!—

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CHAPTER V.

I will be proud,—I will read politic authors,—I will wash off gross acquaintance,—I will be point-device, the very man!—I do not now fool myself to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me, —Jove and my stars be praised!—

SHAKSPEARE.

Il cherchait de grand soucy en quelle manière commencer à parler; car il ne savait s'il était en l'air ou en la terre; et ainsi fait l'amour à ses subjects.—

LA BIBLIOTHÉQUE BLEUE.

It is the enviable privilege of Castle Builders that, instead of wasting time in deploring the fall of their airy erections, they are as ready to recommence the unprofitable toil as a child its house of cards, or a swallow its nest of clay.

Never did the unstable nature of my aspirings, prove of higher account to me, than when, after an uneasy day spent at Lyarák—where I found letters from home entitling me to

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excuse myself to Prince Anton, I commenced my journey;—alone, for I had no longer leisure for the pleasant lounge to Paris we had anticipated. To save time, I was forced to hurry back by Ratisbon and Brussels. The marriage of one of my sisters, of which previous letters of intimation had miscarried, demanded my immediate presence.

A suppressed smile in the blue depths of the expressive eyes of Princess Crescentia, betrayed a more intimate acquaintance with my motives and repinings, than was pleasant to my pride. But I took my last leave of her like a Spartan—though Count Engelbert was showing his white teeth, triumphantly over her shoulder; and I defy the quickest witted individual present,—whether the Princess's pet confessor or the Prince's body physician,—to say that I showed more emotion in impressing my farewell kiss upon the hand of the young Princess, than of the old.

The moment I found myself alone in my glory in my britzka, with the long wasted shadow of the careworn Felix reclining in the rumble, with the aspect of a prisoner released

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after twenty years' durance by the fall of the Bastille. I began, as I said before, to create a new Walhalla for myself among the wintry clouds; an occupation which, more than fur *caput* or *chancelière*, enabled me to defy the inclemency of the wintry weather.

"Thank Heaven," said I, (while four powerful post-horses dashed me along at a rate which made me sensible alike to the merits of the Prince of Tour and Taxis, the postmaster-general, and the savageness of the trackless Hungarian wilds,) "thank Heaven, my weakness is known only to my friend Anton, who has not a single English connection. No fear that the brief madness of my passion for the bright particular star of Lyarák, should transpire! All that need be known in England of my Hungarian campaign is the number of wolves and boars I saw slaughtered,—the number of peasants who slaved at our battues,—the number of hogsheads of wine broached during the hunting season,—and the number of Wallachians who, on finding Szent Miklós honoured by princely occupation, hurried across the border with horses, perfumes, gems, sabres,

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pipes, and brocades, to tempt us into traffic: sufficient, God wot, to make Hawley Chase, Roxborough Elms, and the Archdeacon prick up their ears. The noble mastiff crouching beside Felix in the rumble,—my *caput* of sables,—my Turkish pipes,—and above all the case of opals in my dressing-case, will attest the truth of my travels; and convince such spooneys as Charley Roxborough that I come from a land where his full-dress notions of Pytchely horsemanship would pass for the milk-and-water prowess of a boarding school."

I accordingly set about cultivating a pair of mustachios, already of redundant growth; and rejoiced that the weather-staining of the sporting season had bronzed away the delicacy of complexion created by my Baden disaster.

"Let Albertine look to herself!" cried I, "for I am no longer the effeminate boy who had scarcely courage to enter her opera-box! If Count Engelbert's vauntings disgusted me, at least, they opened the eyes of the blind. I am beginning to understand now that faint heart and faint hand never won fair lady:—and the lady I am resolved to win, shall admit that *every*

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pigeon voyageur does not return with drooping head and trailing wing to its expectant nest."

I gloried in my own uncouthness, — I delighted in smelling of smoke like a *tabagie*. The foreign cut of my garments appeared to *me* the title-page of a romance. In all the modern ones I could bring to mind, either printed or acted, a travelled man of my complexion was the Lovelace of the plot. The last letters of Sir Robert Hawley intimated more plainly than even his preceding ones, a desire that Wrottesley Wrottesley should succeed to the privileges and possessions of Wrottesley Hawley; and with such a property and such a wife in prospect, I had only to bless my stars for having been defeated in materializing a Castle in the Air, by the mere planning of which I had richly incurred a verdict of "Temporary insanity."

With respect to Emily's marriage, announced by my mother in four Bath post sheets full of elegiacs, I was too thankful for the pretext it had afforded for my hurried journey to philosophise as I ought to have done on finding the mighty

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fallen. Unable to defer my Yorkshire journey by a previous visit to Hentsfield, I contented myself with reminding Mrs. Powerscourt that, at five-and-twenty, her daughter was fully competent to choose for herself; while to Emily's appeal to my brotherly feelings, I answered that since by her own account she had cherished for the last five years an attachment for the curate of Berkhampstead the Reverend Howard Smith, (amazing by the way the passion of Browns, Greens, and Smiths for attaching an aristocratic prefix to surnames that render them all but anonymous!) I should be most happy to give her away at the wedding and add five thousand pounds to her fortune. "But that as to the living of Rainham"—(which I suspected to afford some inducement to the Reverend Howard in seeking her hand,)—"it was already disposed of to a young clergyman, enjoying an excellent constitution."

I begged her to communicate this piece of information with my compliments to the worthy curate, whose demureness in former tea-drinkings at Hentsfield, had always moved my detestation; and afford me and my men of

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business due notice of the signing of the settlements and the happy day.

Having eased my conscience by this shallow tribute to the claims of my kindred, away I went into Yorkshire; almost as much elated as when, some three years before, I followed the same direction. Had the holly and misletoe which decorated the turnpikes and park lodges along the road, been expressly placed there in honour of the majority which, three weeks later, I was to accomplish, I could not have felt more convinced that the intervening shires between Long's Hotel and Wrottesley Hall, were preparing to celebrate my coming of age.

So earnest were the invitations addressed to me by Sir Robert Hawley's last two or three letters, that I made up my mind to proceed straight to the Chase, with the blushing honours of my travels thick upon me,—my tall courier, my Hungarian mastiff, my case of opals, my furred coats, my sweeping mustachios, and a mingled perfume of tobacco and essence of roses, conveying forcible reminiscences of the Turkish frontier. Better go just as I was.—All that was eccentric in my appearance or

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belongings would serve to vivify the stagnant atmosphere of the old house. Even Albertine, with the mercurial flutterings of a Frenchwoman, would not fail to be captivated by quaintnesses which spoke eloquently of a foreign land, *then* as much *terra incognita* as now that cannibal country, where, according to Sydney Smith, cold clergyman is served on the sideboard.

As we passed the lodge of the Chase, which, by calculation, I reached before dusk, a double allowance of evergreens in the windows announced a still greater sympathy in the forthcoming events. But I also noticed that the lodge had been whitened; and that, instead of the solitary apple-tree and thorn-hedge which used to complete the messuage, a neat little garden had been laid out. The ornamental plants were killed down by the frost; but the winter vegetables were flourishing. This might account, perhaps, for the cheerful smile of my old friend Mary Gale, as she opened the gate, and bobbed innumerable curtsies to welcome my return.

In spite of myself, I felt more nervous as we

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drove up to the door, than on the day I approached it first, on foot, after escaping from Gripham and the coffin of my late revered relative. I was both conscience-sick and uneasy.—If the favourable sentiments entertained towards me in Paris by Mrs. Hawley should have undergone a fatal change, from all she had heard of me in my own neighbourhood!—If I should no longer find in Sir Robert's heiress the good and gracious Albertine of Les Epines,—that gentle being, who at parting had hazarded such unmistakeable demonstrations in my favour!—

But no! She received me charmingly,—almost affectionately: as one who has been long expected, yet whose coming is a pleasing surprise at last. It seemed odd to hear her propose going to apprise Sir Robert of my arrival, lest he should be startled and affected; she, who ought in that house to be a still greater stranger than myself! But she proposed it so kindly, that I was content to be preceded into his presence by such a harbinger; particularly as there ensued no delay in begging me

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instantly to "step up." Sir Robert would see me in his dressing-room.

It was the self-same apartment I used to think so dreary, and the self-same old man I used to think so desolate. I had pitied them both,—I had shunned them both,—as so faded and cheerless, that it made one fancy one's hair turning grey to spend a sunless hour under their influence. But no! they could *not* be the same!—The blazing fire in the bright steel grate,—the newly-papered walls, with a pattern of vine-wreaths on a highly-glazed white ground, —the rich furniture of rosewood and dark green velvet, with curtains to match,—the full piled Axminster carpet—the handsome bronzes on the broad white marble chimney-piece,—had created one of the pleasantest dressing-rooms I ever entered; while the old gentleman, seated in an easy chair of green morocco, with smiles upon his cheeks and tears in his eyes, was quite as much a new creation as the room. None but a woman's hand could have effected such a transformation!

"At last, my dear Wrottesley, *at last!*"

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faltered Sir Robert, looking me earnestly in the face. "We have been expecting you till I had almost ceased to expect. But Albertine, who seems to understand your movements better than I, always assured me you would be here before the twentieth. It would have been a sad mortification to me, Harry, had you absented yourself from the celebration of your coming of age!"

I assured him, of course, that such an act of disregard was impossible; and, after answering a variety of questions concerning my journey and the number of days it had taken me to reach London from Vienna, began to look so restlessly at the door in hopes that Mrs. Hawley would make her appearance, that he seemed to think it necessary to account for her.

"We dine at five," said he, "because that foolish old fellow Gurgle has made my granddaughter believe that the hours kept by other people are bad for me; and as the half-hour bell rang just before you arrived, she is probably gone to dress."

"In that case," said I, "that I may not

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keep you waiting, my dear Sir, allow me to ask for my dressing-room."

"Why, I cannot say but you would be the better for a little trimming and shaping," observed my guardian, contemplating with an air of fatherly commiseration my shaggy head and hirsute visage. "A hunting party in the heart of a forest is not exactly the thing, Harry, to bring you into training for a lady's presence. —But till to-morrow, my dear boy, we will dispense with your looking *quite* like other people!"

And while waiting for a servant to show me to my chamber, he added—"They will give you, I dare say, the old blue room. But it is not called the blue room *now*. Every thing is altered at the Chase. That dear girl has restored the dead to life. That dear girl has put young blood into my veins. My granddaughter is the good genius of the place. It has been a great amusement to her to furnish and brighten up the house; and I feel twenty years further from the grave since she redeemed the ruinous aspect of every thing around me.—

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By the way, Harry," continued he, calling me back as I was quitting the room, "have you brought her news from her family? Did you see Monsieur Des Auliers as you passed through Paris?"

I explained to him that I had taken the upper or couriers' road home from Vienna, and had not been near Paris.

"I am sorry for that," he replied, "for she will be sadly disappointed. And so am I; for I wanted to know from a credible witness how her uncle bears her absence; and whether he would be likely to resent her remaining settled in England by a second marriage."

It was not for *me* to deliver my opinion on a point which, I flattered myself so nearly concerned me; and in order to relieve my embarrassment, I began to inquire after the Roxboroughs.

The old gentleman's countenance fell.

"I have much to tell you about them," said he; "but nothing that you will hear with pleasure. By your leave therefore, Harry, we will defer all mention of the family till to-mor-

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row; that no unpleasant feeling may mar the comfort of your welcome home."

Always willing to second the postponement of disagreeable discussions, I escaped from the room in order to make the best of myself by the most impressive toilet which the latest fashions of the Wollgraben enabled me to exhibit.

I will not deny, moreover, that I also made the best of myself during dinner-time, while recounting our hunting adventures by flood and fell; the cliffs we had ascended and the rivers we had forded, at Szent Miklós, in pursuit of sport; and the severities by which the game-laws were maintained against the spirit-broken vassals of Prince Zriny. In describing an encounter of which I had been one day a witness, between his jägers and some Moldavian vagrants, any one might have supposed that I had "taken the uncircumcised dogs by the beard and smote them" till they yelled for mercy. For Felix, overcome by the fatigues of his journey, had dispensed with waiting upon me as usual at table; and I profited by the opportunity of having no importunate witness

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present, like Banquo's ghost at the feast of Macbeth, to look me down while I was bragging.

I had certainly every encouragement to proceed. Such was Sir Robert's almost paternal partiality, that if I had chosen to repeat the numeration table, he would have listened with interest; and as to Mrs. Hawley, Desdemona herself could not have been a more attentive auditress. They contrived to make me relate to them of Hungary and the Hungarians twice as much as I knew; and Albertine appeared fully to share my enthusiasm concerning the equestrian nation which ploughs its fields and works its wine-presses in spurs; as proud of the legendary consequence of its ancient kingdom, as the most barefaced, barefooted, and barebacked cadger in Connaught.

Sir Robert, indeed, kept harking back to my accident at Baden; and was evidently of opinion that evil effects must yet remain. But the manner in which Albertine managed to silence him,—as if conscious that the subject must be a sore one,—excited suspicions in my mind, long afterwards confirmed, that the most

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unflattering accounts had reached them of the catastrophe. I had, in fact, been represented as having been nearly killed by perpetrating buffooneries, while in a state of intoxication, for the entertainment of a fashionable party !—

After dinner, when we repaired from the old eating-room whose solemnities still remained untouched, to the elegant little drawing-room especially devoted to Mrs. Hawley's use, which bore in every object it contained the impress of a Parisian's graceful fancy, I could not but compliment her—(seeing that neither coffee nor tea sufficed to animate my poor old guardian out of his habitual doze, which he did not enjoy the less for the comfortable *fauteuil* in which he was ensconced)—on the miracles she had wrought at Hawley Chase.

"I will not certify," she replied, with a smile such as might have melted an iceberg, "that I did not, on my arrival, overturn every thing and disparage every body I met with, in the hope of making my company unacceptable, and getting sent back in disgrace to the Rue des Tournelles. But the kindness with which Sir Robert submitted to my whims and fancies,

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disarmed my perversity; and all my latter attempts have been suggested by a most disinterested desire to render his house more comfortable and his life more easy."

There was every reason to congratulate her on the result. I could not recognise in the cheerful, airy, well-attended country-house in which I found myself, the mildewed retreat of hypochondriacism in which I had never been able to pass four-and-twenty hours without contracting the blue-devils; nor could I refrain from expressing a wish, accompanied by a sigh not quite loud enough to disturb the slumbers of my old guardian, that some benignant fairy would be at the trouble of working at Wrottesley Hall a hundredth part of the wonders she had effected at the Chase.

It would have been too much like a pretence to carry matters by a *coup de main*, had I proceeded at once to say more. A few days' enactment of the farce of disinterested friendship were necessary as a preliminary to those demonstrations which, whether late or early, must be crowned with success.

Next day, my surprise was a thousand fold

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increased.—Charley Roxborough himself could not have got up the stable department to a higher pitch of perfection, than the woman whose notions of horses and equipage I imagined to be limited to the long-tailed Normandy geldings of Monsieur Des Auliers, and her own modest calash and pair of bays;—nor, on repairing to the breakfast-table, could I retain an exclamation of joy at seeing the tea-and-toast propensities of the old Baronet laid aside for a breakfast which, without discrediting the substantialities of Yorkshire fare, conveyed pleasant reminiscences of Tortoni's. Even the old serving-men, though unchanged,—for she would have considered it as sacrilegious to remove the faithful old adherents from their posts, as to tear down the family pictures from the walls or the ivy from the clock turret)—were so revived by the presence of youth and beauty, that their faculties seemed brightened. They were not half so blind, deaf, lame, or stupid, as they used to be.

The only fault I had to find with the breakfast-table was, that no one condescended to share it with me. Both Mrs. Hawley and

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Sir Robert breakfasted in their own rooms, and did not come down till luncheon time; and I consequently resolved to ride over to Wrottesley in the interim. For I was eager to be at home,—eager for a glimpse of Old Nicholls's withered, but loving face; and above all, eager to unravel a thousand mysteries concerning which, I would not for worlds, have questioned my good guardian. The name of Rainham or of the Roxboroughs, could not decently be pronounced at Hawley Chase.

I experienced, I confess, some emotion on approaching the confines of my domain. So severe a frost had set in, that there was no one at work in the fields by whom I could be recognized. But on reaching the western lodge, there was something that went to the bottom of my heart, in the sudden flush of joy that reddened the face of the lodge-keeper's wife, on hailing that of her young master.

As yet, my arrival had not transpired. These people still thought of me as a pilgrim in lands beyond the sea; nor had I the least reason for feeling vexed when I perceived every shutter of the old house hermetically sealed, so that,

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from its frozen lawn, it looked grievously like a bankrupt manufactory. But my own face reddened like that of the lodge-keeper's wife, under the apprehension that it must have appeared in the same light to the eyes of the comfort-loving Albertine.

No matter! There was plenty of time before us both for Mrs. Wrottesley to reform its defects; and an immediate solace awaited me in the joy with which poor old Nicholls was sure to welcome my return. I had brought him an embroidered Hungarian tobacco-pouch, as a token of remembrance when far away; an honour which, combined with the glad tidings I had to communicate, that one of his beloved young ladies was on the eve of a happy marriage, would, I doubted not, bring tears to his eyes.

"Where is Nicholls? Send Nicholls here," cried I to the grinning bumpkin by whom the back door to which I unceremoniously repaired, was opened at my summons. And when he scuffled off, and was lost to view at the end of the offices, I nothing doubted that the old man was enjoying his pipe and cup of October

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in the steward's room—his custom ever of an afternoon.

But when, after five minutes' delay, neither he nor the bumpkin made his appearance, I hurried in through the dark damp passages, which, in an empty house, are apt to remind one of the mouldiness of a family vault.

The first person I met was a respectable-looking woman, who appeared to have been added to the establishment since I quitted it; to whom I hastily renewed my previous orders that Nicholls might be sent for.

"Am I addressing the Squire?" was her cool reply. "Are you really Mister Wrottesley?"

"Really Mr. Wrottesley. Let me speak immediately to Nicholls!"

"Why deary me, Sir, you don't seem to have heard!" exclaimed the new house-keeper. "Yet Mr. Grip'em told us he'd wrote to you every day from the very first."

"From the very first of *what?*"

"Of the typhus breaking out in the house, Sir."

"The typhus!" cried I, hastily retreating

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along the passage, as if death and destruction were staring me in the face.

"Oh! there ben't no fear *now*, Sir," resumed my informant, following me resolutely to the door, as if determined that I should share the danger residing in the hem of her garment. "It's four months since the fever broke out in the house. Bob the letter-boy, was the last as fell ill; and he's been about again these ten days. Poor Mr. Nicholls, Sir, was the *first.—He* was buried a week afore Candlemas."

Buried!—Poor Nicholls, my earliest adherent —my father's faithful old servant—laid in the earth! Had not the buxom house-keeper been staring me in the face, fain would I have sat me down on the wooden bench beside the door, and wept!—At all events, she noticed enough of my emotion to spare me further details; except that "the old gentleman went off like the snuff of a candle," dying as quietly as he had lived. The only complaint he had been heard to utter, was at the commencement of his seizure, before stupor intervened,—that "it was a hard thing he should not live to see

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his young master's face again:—that there was a many things on his mind he should like to have told to Master Harry."

To this stranger, I cared as little to put further questions, as to let her see how deeply I was affected. All I asked was about Gripham. "When had he been there?—When was he expected again?"—

"He had been there two days before; and may be mightn't come again for a day or two. There was no saying. His wisits was never to be reckoned upon."

Just as an agent's visits ought to be. The man seemed to be doing his duty. I determined, therefore, to write and to announce my return, and appoint a meeting with him at the Hall. But till then, I had no wish to re-enter its doors. The word typhus appalled me; my last experience under my own roof had been an illness of six weeks' duration; and I had no ambition to reinaugurate myself by another. My winter attack and accident at Baden had placed me long enough on the sick-list the preceding year, without throwing myself once more into the hands of the doctors.

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Remounting my horse, therefore, I signified to the men who came crowding about me from the offices tugging their forelocks in my honour, and vociferously wishing me a happy new year and all the rest of it, that I was staying at the Chase, and should ride over again in a day or two. I passed leisurely through the village; though, for anything I knew, the typhus might have communicated itself thither from the Hall; and on seeing as I went by the church-door open as if for repairs, tied my horse to the gate of the churchyard and hurried in;—hoping to learn from the venerable clerk in what part of it poor Nicholls was laid, and who had accompanied him to the grave.

The clerk was indeed in attendance. I descried him standing with a red comforter over his nose in the chancel; superintending some workmen who were putting up what seemed to be a monumental tablet, or perhaps a new table of the commandments, near the communion table. Finding him too much absorbed in what was going on to notice me, I advanced towards him so as, before I addressed him, to obtain a view of the work he was inspecting; when lo! a

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single glance at a marble tablet adorned with the inverted torches significant of death, served to plunge me into a stupefaction still greater than his own.

Sacred to the Memory of

CAROLINE ROXBOROUGH,

Died Nov. 3rd, 1822.

Aged 21 Years.

"Blessed are the pure in spirit, for they shall see GOD."

Sacred to her MEMORY!—Nothing then remained on earth of that lovely and most woman-hearted being, who for a time had swayed all the pulses of my heart, and whom I had been a main instrument of dooming to an early grave!

On seeing me lean against the high oaken wainscot of an opposite pew contemplating the inscription, the clerk advancing hat in hand, in the idea that I was playing the critic on the place assigned it, begged to inquire whether "I thought the monument oughtn't to be placed a trifle nigher the window?"

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"If your honour pleases," said he, "I'll step to the parsonage and tell Dr. Temple you're here; and then, you might give him your own notions about the tom'stone."

This of course I peremptorily declined. But I could not refrain from inquiring where the remains of poor Caroline were laid.

"Just under your honour's fut;—just opposite the rectory pew, so that no one can enter it without treading over her grave."

"By Dr. Temple's wish?"—

"By the poor young lady's wish, Sir, on her death-bed."

"She died then at the Parsonage?"—

"No, Sir! At an inn, on her way hither from the north; with Miss Adela as was, now a lord's lady, attending on her. But the Elms being let to strangers, she did not wish, like, to be carried to a place which could scarce be called a home. And so she begged to be laid beside our good rector's late lady, who'd been all as one as a mother to her when she was a child. Poor young lady,—poor young lady! There was a many sore hearts in the church, Sir, the day Miss Caroline was lowered into the

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ground. Working folks belonging to the Elms, came from far and near, Sir, when they heard one of Sir Gratian's young ladies was to be buried; and when they found 'twas Miss Car, Sir, I warrant they'd as soon it had been a child or sister of their own. For, as all the people said,—she was an angel born. Not a creature ever had a harsh word or harsh look from Miss Caroline,—though many a sorrowful one—for her heart was too heavy for her years. While the Doctor was reading the burial service over her, there warn't a dry eye in the church."

I wanted breath and self-possession to silence him; and could I have driven him and the masons from the spot, would fain have flung myself down on the cold stone that covered the remains of Caroline, and besought her pardon for the injuries I had done her, and her intercession with that mighty Avenger with whom she was at that moment in bliss.

But false pride made me close up my eyelids to conceal my tears; and when I desired the loquacious clerk to point out to me in the churchyard the grave of my faithful old servant

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as the object of my errand in Wrottesley Church, the man was so terrified by the hoarse sternness of my voice in the dread of having unintentionally offended me, that he kept mingling with the information he afforded, uncouth supplications for forgiveness.

"Mr. Nicholls was laid just there,—under the shade of the north transept: just agin Peggy Watts's little boy, which died last Michaelmas of the measles. He hoped no offence to my honour for his making so free. Mr. Gripham talked of a headston'. But if he'd known my honour was not on friendly terms with the Roxborough family, he'd ha' cut his tongue out afore he'd dropped a word about the poor young lady. And Mr. Gripham wasn't certain, for the matter of the register or the coffin-plate, whether poor old Master Nicholls war' seventy-five or seventy-six. But may be my honour would cause it to be rectified when it came to the tom'ston'."—

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CHAPTER VI.

C'est une des lois fatales de l'humanité que rien n'y atteigne le but; tout y reste incomplet:—les hommes, les choses, la gloire, la fortune, et la vie.

GEOFFROY.

I DO not ask even the gentlest of my readers to pity me. One and all, dear public, you have probably long since decided me to be a vain, shallow, worthless fellow; the history of whose fortunes you follow to the close, only in hopes of finding him brought to pains and penalties at last.

But this I promise you,—that I was abundantly deserving of pity. To be condemned to go through my Sabbath devotions for the remainder of my life within view of that terrible remembrancer of my heartlessness,—the early

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grave of the good and gentle Car,—and within reach of the searching and Nathan-like admonitions of the offended Dr. Temple, whose every look would convey,—"Thou art the man by whom she was wrested from our love,"—was a sad drawback on the joys of home. Now that I had got for nearest neighbour one who, throughout my college days, had treated me with such insulting disdain as Lord John Jocelyn, there was some excuse for the fervour of my wish that Wrottesley Hall and Hawley Chase stood in some less desirable spot than the West Riding.

For I had not been half an hour in my good guardian's society, before I found that Lord John had already been voted infallible by a grand conclave of country gentlemen, as Pope of the district. Lord John was reforming parish abuses,—Lord John was pulling up turnpike trusts, — Lord John was pulling down notices to trespassers,—Lord John was giving shelter to vagrants and work to trampers,—Lord John had thrown open the preserves of the Elms,—Lord John had thrown down the barriers of his park. Had he been inclined to

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start against Courtfield of Courtfield Manor as representative of the county, the chances were that he might carry the day.

All this was vexatious enough; for he had assumed the very ground on which it had been my intention to take my stand; and it was as though some actor, to whom a *debut* has long been promised in the part of Hamlet, were to see the rival to whom he had secretly assigned the part of Laertes, arranged in the suit of sables and black bugles his heart delights in, and welcomed by the public with unbounded applause.

I could have borne the infatuation of the country gentlemen, or the obsequiousness of churchwardens and select vestries; for in the eyes of such toadies in grain, the virtues of a Duke's son are at all times worthy of canonization. But I could not forgive Sir Robert,—I could not forgive Mrs. Hawley. *They* need not have had the Jocelyns perpetually on the tip of their tongue. They need not have judged it necessary to model their household after the fashion of the Elms. They were the very people to have maintained an honourable independence.

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I did not, alas! give them credit for such delicacy of feeling as prompted them, throughout luncheon time, to dwell upon the admirable household arrangements of Lord and Lady John, while Sir Robert declared that the change of society at the Elms increased the value of property in the neighbourhood, only with the charitable view of directing my mind from such miserable self-accusations as must naturally have arisen from a first visit to Wrottesley and the Hall. For Mrs. Hawley was well qualified to enter into the remorse occasioned by a sight of Caroline Roxborough's grave; and Sir Robert, the gray-headed master of gray-headed retainers, to comprehend how my heart must have swelled within me on learning the fate of my father's faithful attendant.

And so, to avoid noticing the redness of my eyes and hoarseness of my voice, they went on talk—talk—talking of Lord John's beautiful set of bays, Lord John's exquisite new phaeton, Lord John's unrivalled model farm, Lord John's unbounded charity, and unwearied inquiries into the wants, backslidings, and sufferings of the people,—as though none but such a saint on earth were deserving the interesting

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wife, who was his crown of rubies: and to my jealous but shortsighted eyes, they seemed to take far more interest in his prospect of becoming the father of a son and heir, than about the sheep and oxen about to be roasted whole in honour of my majority.

"It afforded me almost sufficient consolation, my dear Wrottesley, for my grievous disappointment about Rainham," added Sir Robert, when at length I led to the subject of the discovery my morning's ramble had procured me, and frankly avowed the anguish it had produced in my heart, "to find that the Mr. Whichcote, whose nomination was so painful to us, was an intimate friend of my excellent neighbour at the Elms. The regard of such a man as Lord John, conveys a certificate of merit; and as nothing, alas! will now recall poor Car from the grave, I am gratified that the substitute for Henry Temple should prove an eligible person. I gave my hand the other day at the Elms to your *protégé*, Mr. Whichcote, as warmly as though I had not been forced as your trustee, to name him Rector of Rainham."

This was the unkindest cut of all. To have

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Sir Robert siding with Tom Whichcote, who, if the Rainham living had been really bartered with his brother in payment of a debt, doubtless considered himself as free from all obligation towards me and as much at liberty to brow-beat me on my own estate, as at a wining party at Cambridge,—was more than my fortitude could stand. Whichever way I turned at Wrottesley Hall, I should be surrounded by enemies or objects of reproach! The coldness of Lord John,—the hauteur of Lord Clanalbin's sister, —the sneering face of Tom Whichcote,—but above all,—the silent grave of Caroline,—were things to drive one thousands of miles out of the country.

My sole solace lay at the Chase. The persevering affection of a man so esteemed in the county as Sir Robert Hawley, would always secure me a certain degree of consideration; and he had already proposed to introduce me at the earliest opportunity to his friend Lord Meadowley, to whom I resolved to communicate my hopes of becoming a staunch supporter of his party, and my resolve to nail his colours to my mast: and we all know the importance

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assigned to the meanest cipher in England by taking up a strong political position.

Still warmer were the hopes of happiness I invested in an union with Albertine. She, whose graces of manner and attachingness of disposition had already, in a strange country, surrounded her with troops of friends, would obtain for me, when at the head of the noble establishment created by our united fortunes, the deference of which I was so covetous. Not all the Lord and Lady John Jocelyns in the world, —not all the Tom Whichcotes in or out of the pulpit,—could look us down or sneer us down, when enabled to afford to our neighbours the perfection of English hospitality seasoned by the piquancy of continental *savoir vivre*. To the kind, the lovely, the conciliating being who now exercised more than the influence of a daughter at Hawley Chase, I should be indebted, therefore, among other blessings for the public respect which, the more I had shaken, the more I had learned to appreciate.

When seated beside her tea-table that evening, though it was pain and grief to me to pronounce the name of Roxborough, I could

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not but hazard an inquiry after my worthy friend the Archdeacon.

"In great force, Harry," replied Sir Robert, interposing; "and very proud of having contributed so largely to the comfort of my declining years, by escorting Mrs. Hawley hither. But I will not conceal from you, my dear boy, that you are quite out of his good books. He persists in attributing to *you* a large share in the wretched fate of his poor cousin."

"In all fairness, Sir," said I, colouring up, "he ought to assign to her brother the responsibility of her disappointment."

"On the contrary, he declares that, but for your persisting in your courtship in spite of her decided rejection and your knowledge of her engagement to another, Sir Gratian and his son would have relented in favour of Henry Temple. — He fancies that Wrottesley Hall thrown into the scale, decided matters irrevocably against her."

"In the first place," cried I, with growing eagerness, "I never proposed to poor Caroline Roxborough, and never was rejected."

"Is not that pretext a little sophistical?"

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inquired Sir Robert with an indulgent smile. "If not in words, my dear Harry, was not your attachment demonstrated in deeds? Not a soul in this part of the country but believed, on your friend Mr. Roxborough's showing, that you waited only the accomplishment of your majority to place your hand and fortune at her feet."

"God forbid that I should deny the impression made upon me by her attractions and her virtues!" said I with deep emotion. "But the most infatuated puppy upon earth would scarcely venture to push his pretensions against the iron barrier of a first love and solemn betrothment."

"To say the truth, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Albertine, with an arch smile, "you are accused of a decided *penchant* towards engaged young ladies. We have heard of a certain Mademoiselle de Bonval, and a certain Princess Crescentia, being sorely put to their fidelity by the ardour of your homage."

That rascal Felix!—The fellow had clearly been avenging his sufferings at Lyarák by

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gossipping in the steward's room concerning my travelling adventures!

"Mélanie de Bonval," said I, swelling with rage, "is a finished coquette, who would consider herself ill-used if not flirted with. Princess Zriny received at my hands nothing beyond the attentions due to the young lady of a house, of whose hospitalities one is partaking."

"Which scarcely accounts, however," persisted Albertine, with the same provoking smile, "for certain orgies at Szent Miklós, when glasses were broken in the Princess's honour to an extent which compelled the guests to drink less honoured healths out of hunting cups, the following day."

True, by Jupiter! and a horrible evidence of the uncivilized state of the environs of Szent Miklós; where not a goblet, save of horn or wood, was to be bought, stolen, or borrowed, except by an express to Bisztricz or Hermannstadt. But as Felix was not in attendance on me in Transylvania, how could she possibly have learned all this? And since so well instructed in the incidents of our expedition, might she

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not be equally cognizant of my numerous falls from my horse, and all the scrapes and blunderings from which I had been extricated by the Prince's *jagdmeister;* to say nothing of the sorry figure and bleeding face I exhibited when rescued from a thicket of thorns, where I was flung by a horse which any other of the party would have mastered?—A thousand biting jests, to which I had been subjected by the impertinence of Count Engelbert,—such as spectres effulgent with phosphorus, who beset my pillow by night,—and bands of Tsigány or gypsies who waylaid and appalled me whenever I lagged behind the hunt in the forest,—were perhaps registered in her mind with equal exactness!—What enemy could have done this?—What spy had tracked my steps for the sole purpose of rendering me ridiculous in the eyes of Albertine?—

I know not that I amended my cause by the assumption of an air of offended dignity. But Sir Robert perceiving I was hurt, and anxious to prevent all unpleasant feelings between us, considerately changed the conversation by inquiries respecting my sister's marriage: a subject,

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however, on which he seemed better informed than myself: since he was able to tell me that the father of Mr. Howard Smith, a wealthy city merchant, had purchased for him the perpetual advowson of an excellent living; so that on the death of an incumbent eighty-nine years of age, he would come into more than two thousand a-year.—And I, who had taken upon myself to say bitter things to poor Emily, touching the unlucky rectory of Rainham!

Next day, drove over Lord and Lady John; evidently unprepared to see me, but in habits of daily intercourse with Mrs. Hawley, such as were likely to arise between two accomplished young women of the same age and pursuits. I had no excuse for feeling vexed that less than six months' acquaintance should have produced an almost sisterly intimacy between them. But it did provoke me to find myself seated there, an utter stranger to Lord John, with whom I had been two years at college; while the two ladies, no longer Lady John and Mrs. Hawley but Mabella and Albertine, were gossipping together like school-girls about Berlin patterns and Rossini's duets! It is true that when our

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formal presentation was over, he professed a desire for neighbourly intercourse between us. Still, the terms in which his good-will demonstrated itself, were as though a man at the top of Mont Blanc were addressing a person in the Vale of Chamouny!

It was probably his intention to make use of me to co-operate in his plans for the education of the poor, and the introduction of temperance societies: making the virtue and merit of the project his own, and leaving the trouble and responsibility on my shoulders.

Before they rose to depart, I heard Mrs. Hawley propose a dinner-party, in the course of a day or two, to bring us again together. But, as I either heard or fancied I heard the name Dr. Temple included in the project, I excused myself so promptly when the scheme came to be discussed aloud, on the plea of being obliged to return to London on my way to my sister's wedding, that, as soon as the Jocelyns were gone, Sir Robert called me into his room.

"Surely I was not thinking of leaving Yorkshire previous to the twentieth?—Surely I

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intended to be present at the celebration of my coming of age?"

I assured him that it would be a great relief to me to stand excused.

"But had I ever heard of such a thing as a young man known to be in the country and in good health, absenting himself on an occasion usually considered the most opportune moment for a declaration of his public views?"

"In most cases, my dear Sir," said I, "a man coming into the enjoyment of such estates as mine, possesses family ties and relations in the county, which surround him with friends and acquaintances. Mine is a peculiar case.—I know no one.—I have no relations to surround me.—Were I inclined to celebrate an event interesting only to myself in the way it is usually done, by a ball to the neighbourhood, I am not acquainted with twenty people to invite."

"But there is no question of your entertaining the neighbourhood, my dear Harry," persisted Sir Robert. "All I wish and expect you to do is to show yourself to the poorer tenantry, who are to dine in a temporary building for the

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erection of which Gripham has already given orders; and to open the ball given to your tradesmen and farmers at Wrottesley Hall, after they have dined together, under Gripham's presiding, at the Wrottesley Arms."

"What you wish and expect from me, dear Sir, shall always be done!" said I, raising his hand to my lips with as much deference as though it had been that of Princess Zriny; "though I will not conceal from you that there is nothing very attractive in the oceans of punch, and salvoes of huzzas inevitable on such an occasion. Meanwhile, I am compelled to leave you to-morrow, for a week, to do duty at my sister's wedding. On Thursday next, I will be again by your side."

The indulgent liberality with which Sir Robert had systematically overlooked my excesses and provided for my exigencies, under the impression that perfect confidence in money matters subsisted between us, placed it wholly beyond his conjectures, that to *me* the day of coming of age conveyed only the idea of a meeting of creditors; or that "coming to my estate" was but another word for liqui-

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dating my debts. The only sinister view, therefore, he took of the 20th of January was, that it was a pity the weather should be so inclement as to threaten half my tenantry with severe catarrhs in honour of the day: —concurring with other sober-minded individuals in wishing that all heirs apparent could be born in summer time, that during the out-door pastimes of ox-roasting and firework displaying, the earth might exhibit a more genial costume than icicles and snow.

Bnt to me, alas! the fatal day to which poor old Nicholls had so often referred with looks as triumphant as though it had been the anniversary of Waterloo, afforded the signal for gathering together a flight of cormorants prepared to pick the flesh from my bones. Had I been the same oppressed starveling who watched the approach of daylight at Hentsfield, three years before, I should have experienced on reaching the close of my pupillage, the unbounded joy of attaining mastership of my own soul and body; and gratefully thanked God that both were strong and unblemished, to enable me to breast the contending waves of life. But

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now, because overwhelmed with prosperity, which had fallen like a dead weight on my energies and crushed and scattered them in every direction,—I beheld in my waking dreams in place of joyful faces congratulating me on my twenty-first birthday, a herd of greasy, hook-nosed, hawk-eyed, rusty, fusty, Levys and Shadrachs, each with his bond and knife, prepared to cut away a pound of flesh!—

An interview with these extortioners, to ascertain their intentions and manifest my own, was indispensable previous to the publicity of my rejoicings at Wrottesley Hall. For a report having gained ground through Charles Roxborough of my intention to settle abroad, the blood-suckers were growing uneasy respecting the legalization of their claims. To pay at sight the sum of £32,000 to which, including interest at 35 per cent, my liabilities amounted, would of course be impossible. But intending to satisfy them to the last doit, it would be easy to renew their bills the moment I acquired legal independance, and pay them off in the course of a month or two, by raising money on mortgage.

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My chief object was to prevent the business from reaching the ears of Sir Robert. Once master of myself, I should become sufficiently so of the men of business employed at my cost, to impose silence on Messrs. Gripham and Co.

To London, therefore, I hastened. But, under the influence of its familiar sounds and petty despotism of routine I shrunk from the stormy discussions awaiting me. Above all things, I hated the thoughts of an interview with Charles Roxborough: whom *I* knew to be the origin of that mournful tablet in Wrottesley Church, which the Archdeacon attributed to my perversity; nor could I look upon him in any other light than as the murderer of his sister.

Having made up my mind to visit him before he was apprized of my being in town or even in England, so as to take him unprepared, I repaired the following morning to his chambers at an hour when I was sure of finding him in bed. At eleven A.M. so decided a votary of fashion could not be denied to me as "not at home."

As I proceeded at a brisk pace towards the

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Albany, I found myself following an old gentleman of spare figure; in deep mourning, but wearing a new crape on a napless hat, and a shabby brown surtout over his black clothes. But that he wanted three stone weight of Sir Gratian's size, I should have fancied from his outline, that the individual in question was no other than the hospitable old Baronet of the Elms. But the scattered locks protruding from the rusty hat and overhanging the collar of the rusty coat, were many degrees whiter than the sable-silvered of my old neighbour.

When he turned the corner by Truefitt's shop, however, there was no mistaking him.—If not Sir Gratian, it was his shadow.—But so great was the alteration in his appearance, that I hesitated about accosting him.—He was so shabbily dressed, that I was afraid he would scarcely like to be recognised; and so thin and haggard, that I feared he might scarcely have wits left to recognise *me*.

I was mistaken. The moment he caught sight of me, he knew and hastened towards me. Still, his manner was far from coherent.

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"Harry Pow'sc'urt?" cried he, returning my shake of the hand. "Why, my son Charles told me, you were gone abroad for good. My son Charles has not the smallest hope of your return to England!"—

"You forget, Sir," said I, "that I attain my majority within the next ten days?"—

"The very reason he thought you likely to remain in foreign parts! Years of discretion bring round settling day,—eh, Sir?"—

And the old man tried to twist his wasted and careworn features into a smile that made my heart sore.

"Settling day will find me forthcoming, Sir Gratian!" said I, endeavouring to return his smile.—On which, he put his thin arm within mine, and turned aside with me into Saville Row,—as if to secure having his talk out in that unfrequented thoroughfare.

"Let me see! you've been gone these ten months, or thereabout?" he resumed, as if searching his recollections. "You were gone afore Ad'la's marriage, weren't you? Ah! my dear young friend,—we've had a sad loss since *that!*"—

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The tablet in Wrottesley Church seemed to depict itself so plainly before my mind's eye, as to extort a sigh from the very depths of my heart.

"I've never held up my head since!" continued Sir Gratian. "Matters were hard enough with us before. But since that stroke, Harry Pow'sc'urt, I've never held up my head."

Cut to the soul by the broken voice in which these words were uttered, I expressed by a few unconnected words my deep sympathy in his bereavement, and the duty of submission to the will of Heaven.

"Even had nothing occurred to distress that poor lost angel," said I, "even had you remained at the Elms, I am convinced nothing would have saved her!"

"Saved her?" faltered he, stopping short, and staring me wildly in the face. "My dear Sir, it is as good as proved that the mare was hocussed!"—

I was now convinced that my first horror of the haggardness of his appearance was not misplaced;—that his mind was thoroughly disordered.

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"Thirteen thousand pounds lost by that day's work!" continued he, resuming his former tone and pace. "Every shilling swallowed up by it. What was left of poor Car's reversion might have been sold to fill the gap. But as her mother's settlements unluckily would have it,—dying unmarried, her rights devolved to her sister; and Fortrose has been made too sharp by Charley's training, to renounce a tittle of his rights."

It was all plain enough now.—*He* had been talking of Miss Jenny,—while *I* was thinking of his sainted child!—

But I soon ceased to wonder that the hocussed mare should be uppermost in his mind. The last losses of his son had brought his affairs to a final crisis. The poor old gentleman had been arrested,—had been in a spunging-house.—With the unprincipled cleverness which his father had always been the first to applaud and encourage, Charles had contrived to fasten the responsibility of his bills upon the shoulders of Sir Gratian.

"It was best so," said he, in explaining to me all he had undergone. "About a poor old

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fellow like me, no one is at the pains of inquiring.—No one missed *me*,—no one made mischief out of *my* disappearance from society. Whereas, if Charles had not been forthcoming, it would have done him irreparable injury. In the set in which Charles is living, such a catastrophe would have been his ruin!"

"But you do not, I hope, mean to say, Sir," cried I, "that it was on this account his liabilities were transferred to your shoulders?"

"No—I should be loath, very loath to think *that!*" faltered the old man, with a sigh as heavy as that I had uttered a few minutes before. "Though I can't but say, I sometimes fear that my son thinks less of such things than he ought.—But the truth is, Wrottesley, Charley's so popular,—Charley's such a general favourite, that he isn't allowed a minute to himself to give proper thought to his affairs. If he'd been sharper after his helpers, Miss Jenny was as sure of her race as— But the case of hocussing was literally all but proved!"

"I am grieved to find, Sir, you should have been the sufferer by such a breach of trust," said I, more gravely. "I fear, you do not find

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in London compensation for the pure air of the Elms;—I fear—"

"Compensation?" interrupted Sir Gratian. "*Compensation?*—My dear young friend,—I havn't known a day's health or happiness since I quitted Yorkshire!—Ask the Archdeacon, Harry. The Archdeacon's a good guess at all I've gone through. When I agreed to let the Elms,—after Charley's bad Doncaster, (you recollect that sad break down of Marmaduke's?) he put such a flattering picture afore me of the life I might lead in town a'ter marrying the girls,—that I should live with him,—walk with him,—drive with him,—belong to his clubs,—be cherished by his friends—"

"In all which you were deceived!" cried I, with indignation. "I see it in your looks!"—

"No, no!—not *deceived!*" interrupted the old gentleman. "Charley's incapable of deceiving me. Charley's too good a fellow to do any thing wilfully unkind. 'Twasn't *his* fault, you know, if he failed to get me into Boodle's. And I can assure you, 'twas by nobody's wish but my own I quitted the Albany."

"You do *not* reside with him then?"

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"How could I, I only ask you? Six days in the week, Charley has dinner engagements,—(dines with all the first people in Lon'on, I can tell you,—from royalty down to ambassadors and dukes!) and on the seventh, he dines at one or other of his clubs,—so what sort of a life, pray, awaited me at his chambers? Then, our hours were so different.—When *he* came home to bed a'ter his frolics, *I* was for getting up; all which was ill-convenient for his servants and made them saucy. So, to set matters straight, I thought it better to set up a snug little lodging of my own,—a two-pair, in Cork Street,—convenient for dining at the Blue Posts. But *that* Charley has put a stop to,—fearing it might get wind who I was, and that meddling people might think it odd *his* father dining at such a place."

"And what have you adopted instead, Sir?" said I, my heart-ache increasing at every word.

"Why, when it's tolerable fine, I walk as far as Leicester Fields,—where there are several cheap ordinaries, where I'm as little like to be known as I should be at Calcutta. But at

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this time o' year, 'tis often pleasanter to dine off a crust or biscuit, by one's fireside, than go out into the snow or sleet, in quest of a chop!"

Poor old gentleman!—No wonder his cheeks were so hollow!

"And is the Archdeacon, Sir, aware of all this?" said I, scarcely refraining from a sympathetic squeeze of his poor self-denying arm.

"Oh! the Archdeacon's been as kind as a brother to me. The Archdeacon's the warmest hearted fellow on GOD's earth!" cried he. "In the first place, he buried poor Car at his own expense, knowing cash was short with me, that I mightn't be beholden to my son-in-law, or those Temples. And many's the ten pound note I've had from him since, without asking or thanking."

"Ten pound notes!"—said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"Let me tell you they're not so plentiful with him as to make me under-rate the obligation," rejoined Sir Gratian. "And I know the money'd come in the lump, instead of driblets,

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only he has got it into his head that Charley drains me of every thing. He as good as told me so."

"And is he far in the wrong?" said I, gravely.

My companion shook his head. "Of course I'm glad to accommodate him with every guinea I can command," said he. "From the time he was a boy at Eton, I always *did*. Isn't he my only son?—Isn't it for *him* to keep up the honour of the family?"—

"Not till you are dead and gone, my dear Sir Gratian," said I. "You must not expect other people to overlook you as completely as you are inclined to overlook yourself."

"You were going to see Charley, perhaps, when I overtook you?" said he, not listening. "But he's never up at this hour. He takes his chocolate and newspaper in bed. I usually call early, just to hear how he's slept,—and whether he's any thing for me to do for him before I see him at dressing-time."

"You do not go in to him, then?"

"No,—he hates being disturbed over his newspaper.—I call again to see him about one. And

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by the way, Wrottesley, if he receives your visit this morning, don't mention a word of what I've been saying to you; for he's constantly accusing me of blabbing. *I* never call any thing blabbing one tells to a friend. But Charley was always close. I believe being on the turf gives people a *habit* of being close."

Alas! how many bad habits does it *not* engender! I afforded him, however, the pledge he required; and as he seemed unwilling to proceed to the Albany with a person likely to offend his son by calling at such an untimely hour, contented myself with giving him my address, and left him to pursue his walk. Fain would I have invited him, ere we parted, to accompany me back the following week to Wrottesley Hall. But it seemed so likely the interview between me and his son might lead to offensive explanations, that I judged it more prudent to wait.

I know not what affinity my still foreign air may have borne to a bailiff's; but there was fuss enough made at Roxborough's chambers about admitting me. I was forced to have recourse to his confidential valet to obtain an

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entrance; which, mistrusting his sincerity, I effected by following close upon his heels into his master's bed-room.

The morning was dull, and his chambers dark at all times. But such a noble fire was blazing in the grate that all the details of the scene were apparent. The epicurean, scarcely emerging from under his eider-down quilt, had already discussed his chocolate and dry toast; and was devouring the Morning Post as if the appetite of curiosity alone remained unappeased.

I saw that he was genuinely glad to see me, from the pains he took to appear unconcerned. And though, for ten minutes, he did nothing but question me concerning my hunting exploits, and inquire whether I had brought over a choice of wolf-skins of my own killing to make him a carriage carpet, the embarrassed tone of his voice convinced me that Rainham and Tom Whichcote were not far from his thoughts. Caroline, I trusted, was not classed with such reminiscences.—In such company, his angelic sister ought not to be called to mind!—

Cutting short his questions, I came at once

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to the purport of my visit.—Would he accompany me to his friends, Messrs. Levy and Shadrach, as witness to the proposals I was about to make them?"

"Why could I not go by myself? He had always found them straight-forward, fair-dealing people. Or if a witness were indispensable, why not take Hampden, who was well known to them both?"

"I am not on terms with Hampden to ask him a favour," said I. "Besides, he is probably at Melton."

"With a ten days' frost set in?"

"At Brighton then; certainly, not in town. But if inconvenient to you to oblige me," said I, "I will take my new lawyer Sumpsit, or his junior partner;—a rope-walk firm,—well up to the ways and means of such miscreants as Shadrach and Co."

As it was by no means the policy of my friend under the eider-down to have the transactions between us sifted by men of the law, he found it both easy and pleasant to accept my proposal.

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"In three quarters of an hour, he was at my service. Would I read the morning paper in his sitting-room while he dressed?"

Instead of reading the morning papers, I amused myself with the visiting and invitation cards in his rack: no breach of confidence, since they were exhibited as part of the furniture of his chambers. All that the royalty and aristocracy of England could do to render life agreeable to this man, was done. If his grey-headed old father, in his shabby brown coat, waited at his door to know how he had rested, the Marchioness of L— was sure of "the honour of his company" every Saturday night after the opera,—the Marchioness of S— on the night following:—while every other day of the week was marked by some Apician dinner at Lord S.'s or Sir G. W.'s, followed by *soirées* of every shade and degree of exclusivism.

The brighter lights and deeper shadows of his life concealed their mysteries within a bureau boasting a Chubb-lock as complicated as that of the closest safe in Lombard Street. Billet-doux and acceptances calculated to

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place more than one happy family in a state of combustion, were united there with the secrets of the betting-book and files of unpaid bills, bearing the successive dates of 1818, 1819, 1821, 1822, (as well as exorbitant interest;) —for it was impossible to affect more order in his disorders than Sir Gratian's thankless son.

In spite of his vocation of rouéism, the walls of the richly furnished room were not, according to the custom of bachelor chambers, adorned with portraits of opera-dancers, or Venuses despoiled of the chastity of the antique by some tawdry strip of drapery whose introduction serves only to create immodest ideas. Engravings after the portraits of royal personages, presented by the royal originals, the frame of each being embellished with a royal crown occupied the places of honour:—the only effigies of private individuals admitted in rivalship, being two small portraits in oils, of Miss Chester and Miss Jenny. How rejoiced I felt at having redeemed the sketch of Minna and Brenda, (poor Adela and Caroline!)—from appearing in such company.

When Roxborough, after full three quarters

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of an hour of ablution, brushing, and polishing, made his appearance, as usual dressed to perfection and emitting only a sufficient tinge of *Bouquet de Florence* to overcome the woolliness of broad-cloth, I begged I might be no obstacle to his breakfasting.—But having reminded me that, between his chocolate and a *consommé aux croutons* at White's, at two o'clock, he seldom took any thing, I remembered the shattered state of a digestion to which solid food was impossible more than once in the four-and-twenty hours: and we started forthwith on our expedition. I was not sorry to find that, in the interval, his cabriolet, (as yet the decent incognito of a brougham was not,) had been brought round for our use; for more than one of his familiar spirits resided in a quarter of the town as little agreeable to approach at noonday, as safe to approach at midnight.

As we reached Oxendon Street, in which stood the den of Shadrach, the least practicable of the blood-sucking tribe of Mordecai who held my signature in their hands, Roxborough proposed going in first, to ascertain whether the old man were at home and in a temper to be

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dealt with,—a suggestion I was wrong to adopt.—But after waiting more than ten minutes at the door, in a frosty atmosphere which sent the mingled breaths of the horse and the tiger who was holding it, into the air, as from the valve of a steam-engine, I jumped out and by a hurried knock gave the signal of my impatience.

The door was opened by Charley himself, apparently in a state of great irritation.

"The old dog is in one of his fits of perversity," said he, in a whisper. "I hardly recommend your seeing him to-day."

"To-day or never!" I replied. "To-morrow, I must be off to my sister's wedding."

"He says," resumed Roxborough, still whispering, and detaining me on the threshold, "that he counted on the money for the twentieth, (four thousand seven hundred, he tells me is the amount—three thousand lent, and seventeen hundred interest,) and have it he must!"—

"Have it he certainly will *not*!" said I coolly. "It was understood between us at the time of the transaction that, though the bond

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was drawn out to meet the attainment of my majority, accommodation was to be afforded me for raising the money."

"Understood between you at the time of the transaction!" cried Roxborough, shrugging his shoulders. "How *can* you talk so like an ass! When was anything ever understood between a man and a Jew, unless 'nominated' in the bond?' Shadrach adheres of course to the letter of his agreement; and unless you do the same, I am afraid you run some chance of not being allowed to preside in peace, on the twentieth, over the broaching of your October."

"At all events, I will see what can be done with the old brute," said I. And unannounced by the ragged stripling who usually officiated as his foot-boy, I pushed my way up the filthy stairs into Shadrach's unsavoury sanctum.

To me, the Jewish race is an object of instinctive abhorrence. Their very savour is as great an abomination in my nostrils, as in those of Queen Bess. But till that day, I had always fancied it was their crawling obsequiousness,—their slavish slavering subjection, which

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moved my disgust;—whereas, on finding my creditor assume the tone and attitude of Shylock, I began to creep in my turn. After listening to insolent taunts and menaces from the withered lips which had hitherto addressed me as a slave a satrap, I was right glad to escape out of his robber's cave.

"The fact is," observed Roxborough, who in his turn seemed a little flustered when we found ourselves once more alone in the cab, "Shadrach has some little excuse just now for his exasperation! He was shamefully done last week by Hampden; who is off to Naples, after getting himself appointed attaché to the mission for the sole purpose of security against proceedings."

"But why am *I* to pay for Hampden's want of integrity?" cried I in a rage. "Shadrach knows that I am both able and willing to pay him."

"*Able*, perhaps," interrupted Roxborough.

"And willing!" said I in a firm and clear voice. "Before this day month, not a guinea of my debts shall be outstanding; though, by raising difficulties for the purpose of annoying

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me, he may perhaps dispose me to raise some in my turn."

"I wish to heavens you were out of his hands," said Charles, thoughtfully. "You heard what he said about making such young English nobs as were in his power, pay the penalty of those who had defrauded him?—I heartily wish you were out of his hands!"—

"Let him do his worst," said I in the defying tone of a man who has lost his temper, "and he may get the worst of it himself!"—

"Let him do no such thing!" retorted Roxborough. "*His* character cannot be rendered blacker by the foulest exposure; whereas on yours, which is spotless, the smallest speck of mud will be perceptible. In the eyes of a large portion of the community, including squaretoes like old Hawley, and old Courtfield, such specks defy the bleaching of even twice eighteen thousand a-year!—And again, I say, I wish you were out of his hands."

"And so do I!" cried I, harassed at length into sincerity. "But I have neither time nor inclination to go through the neces-

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sary forms for raising this sum elsewhere, to pay him off; and have reasons of my own, for not placing my Yorkshire men of business in my confidence."

"I tell you what, Wrottesley," said my companion, slackening his pace as we turned the further corner of Leicester Fields, on our way to the Minories, (to visit another of the money-lending confraternity, of the name of Snettering;) "if you can really return the sum within six weeks, I think I know a man who would accommodate you without much trouble. It is one of my tradesmen who, after Titan's break down at Goodwood last year, lent me somewhere about the same sum, for a month, till I could get my father's signature, for a bonus of five hundred pounds."

"And this man is still get-at-able?"

"I don't think he would like to have his name handed about, or be applied to as a common money-lender," rejoined Charles. "But if you are willing to pay the premium I have mentioned, I will speak to him this very morning, give you his answer at dinner, and you can make out a promissory note, payable on the

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20th of February for £5,200, value received, to be exchanged with me against the money;—always provided you can get the other fellows to come into your terms about renewing their bills."

I had sworn to myself more times than any one would believe, during my stay on the continent, that no possible consideration should ever again induce me to enter into a money transaction with Charles Roxborough. But the force of habit and dread of exposure were too much for me. The venerable face of my guardian and candid countenance of Mrs. Hawley, seemed to rise before me, animated by indignation and disgust. I thought of the Archdeacon's outbreak of lamentation, I thought of

> Reflection's stab, the pitying friend
> With shoulder shrugg'd, and sorry!

And when my companion, in the elation of having prevailed over the scruples of the half-dozen usurers with whom we had to deal, proposed to dispense with further unpleasant interviews betwixt me and Shadrach, by taking

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the whole affair upon his own shoulders, on my simple signature of the bill for £5,200, I thought myself a lucky dog to get my head out of the noose without further abrasions.

Next morning, I left town for Hentsfield. It was not till after the lapse of many months, I discovered that the exasperation of Shadrach was produced by private information afforded him by Roxborough that I was on the eve of returning to the continent, and intended leaving him in the hands of my lawyers; and that the "obliging tradesman," was no other than Roxborough himself, who had often before doubled his floating capital by lending it under a feigned name on exorbitant interest, to some spendthrift friend of whose necessities he was the confidant!

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CHAPTER VII.

To solemnize this day, the glorious sun
Stays in his course and plays the alchemist;
Turning, with splendour of his precious eye,
The meagre, cloddy earth to glittering gold.
The yearly course that brings this day about
Shall never see it but a holiday.

SHAKSPEARE.

LITTLE as I had ever attached myself to Hentsfield, it was a comfort to find myself in my old home again, after all my wanderings and thwartings. Could I have been received under the porch by poor old Nicholls, nothing would have been wanting to my satisfaction. For my mother and sisters were in the highest spirits.—Every body wore a holiday face. My wedding gifts excited general admiration; and satisfied my family that I agreed with the rest of the world in considering Emily more likely

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to be a happy woman as Mrs. Howard Smith, with an income of two thousand a-year, than as the gadding wife of a rattling Captain of Hussars.

My worthy mother said all that is usually said on such occasions by elderly ladies subject to rheumatic gout: that "it relieved her mind from an enormous weight to have obtained so happy a home for one of her dear girls, and so excellent a protector for both;" and my new brother-in-law, who in the tea-partying days of his curacy had contracted a habit of smirking, was forced to bow and smile convulsively, fifty times a day, as he heard the favourite phrase reiterated to successive guests.

Little weddings are usually merrier than great ones; and Emily's was a favourable sample.—Since my attainment of fortune, my sisters had become immensely popular; and when my return to England transpired, with the addition that I came expressly to be present at the wedding, the office of bridesmaid was at a premium. But having, in addition to Dora, already engaged three out of the four Miss Stormonts and a young sister of the bridegroom

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to make up the half-dozen, their pale blue pelisses and bonnets being intended to throw out in still more charming relief the white lace and orange flowers of the bride, no less than nine applications from the ambitious daughters of neighbouring squires were politely rejected.

"I fancied from your letters, mother," said I, on finding myself alone with the old lady, (whose thoughts were sadly distracted from her son's arrival by that of certain raised pies and cases of champagne from Gunter's, for the morrow's breakfast) "that you were not quite on such good terms with Crowsden Grange as formerly. How comes it that the Miss Stormonts are to be bridesmaids?"

"You are right in supposing there was a little coolness," replied Mrs. Powerscourt.—"That foolish, flirting nephew of Sir Thomas's, whom every body pronounced to be in love with Dora, though he was keeping up the farce all the time, at the Grange, of intending to marry his cousin Rose when she was old enough, was the cause of much of bitter feeling."

"Reginald Stormont?"

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"Reginald Stormont. You met him abroad, I believe; for it was from his letters to his cousins we heard that ridiculous story about your climbing trees after a bird's-nest at Baden."

"But what put an end to the rivalship between the young ladies?" said I,—not particularly anxious to hear recited my own chapter of his history.

"Only that he is going to be married to some third person,—some rich foreigner."

"Mélanie de Bonval, of course!" said I, with utter contempt of the fortune-hunter.

"So that *now*," resumed my mother, not noticing my ejaculation, "Dora and her young friends will have the comfort of abusing him together. Your sisters, however, seldom mention his name; having had two or three squabbles with the Stormonts about the story he invented of your making a punchinello of yourself to amuse the Grand Duchess of Baden, and being called *Vogelnester* for your pains."

To avenge myself on Crowsden Grange for having lent an ear to such calumnies, though forced by order of precedence to give my arm at

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the wedding breakfast to Lady Stormont, I devoted my smiles for the remainder of the day to Howard Smith's little sister;—a pretty prattling ninny of seventeen, white, slender, and tender as a spring chicken, and the belle of the Richmond balls; whose head was stuffed as full of Hampton Court officers as a child's wooden box of leaden soldiers. The consequence was, that her rival in pertness, Miss Rose, the spoiled child of the Grange, threatened us more than once in the course of the day, with a fit of hysterics.

Miss Stormont's blooming face had expanded so exuberantly since I saw her, that I longed to place a slate under her cheek, as the gardeners do to a full-ripe melon; while Ellen, the Spanish-looking beauty was rendered haughtier than ever by her conquest of a distinguished foreigner at one of the Hatfield House Tuesdays, since which, however, the twist of his mustachios had not been seen in Hertfordshire; and finding from Dora that her friend intended to cross-question me concerning this evanescent hero,—(a Count something or other, who was chamberlain to some German Prince or King, they did not

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exactly know which or where)—I kept as far aloof as the range of the breakfast-table would admit. But while avoiding Scylla I fell upon Charybdis; and had to undergo the plaintive lamentations of the elegiac Louisa, over the loss Crowsden Grange was destined to sustain in the society of my mother and sisters.

A little alarmed at the idea that the authoress of my days and her unmarried daughter might project a settlement at Wrottesley Hall, it was a relief when Louisa Stormont condescended to explain that, the lease of Hentsfield being on the eve of expiring, the second son of the late Mr. Whichcote of Barming intended to make it his residence.

"And we are all so afraid," added she, with a smile, melting enough to turn the heart of a rhinoceros, "that you will persuade Mrs. Powerscourt to settle near you in Yorkshire!"

"Yorkshire differs widely from the counties round London," said I, fortifying myself proudly in my cravat. "Except in the immediate neighbourhood of the manufacturing towns, there are few country seats adapted to my mother's limited fortune."

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And away I hurried to flirt with little Lucy Smith, and hear wonderful stories of the **th Light Dragoons, and her own hunting exploits with the stag-hounds.

After learning how short a time Hentsfield was to remain in my mother's occupation, I felt less surprised at the recklessness with which she had turned the house out of doors, in honour of my sister's nuptials. The removal of a partition between the housekeeper's room and adjoining parlour, had created a supper-room; while the drying-ground was Benjamin Edgintonized into a very tolerable ball-room,—the adjacent laundry converted by a forest of evergreens into a splendid ante-chamber; and, thanks to the flimsy arrangements which enabled poor Hentsfield for once in its life to return the hospitalities of an excellent neighbourhood, it was my fate to overhear, behind a wall of laurustinus and rhododendron certain allusions to my own prospects and intentions, which set my whole frame into a ferment.

"My dear Ma'am," said the gruffer of two voices conversing familiarly together in the adjoining room, "in spite of all that was said

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of his abilities at the University,—his subsequent conduct has proved him to be a very, *very* silly young man! To sacrifice the noble prospects awaiting him for such a woman as this Mrs. Hawley,—a Papist,—a coquette,—and little better, I fear, than an adventuress!"

"But is your Ladyship certain," replied the other voice, "that the report is to be depended upon?"

"As sure as that I am alive, Ma'am!" rejoined the former speaker. "The acquaintance commenced on the continent. While his family believed him to be travelling for the completion of his education and instruction of his mind, the poor weak creature became entangled in an attachment which, mark my words, will soon end in marriage!"

I, at least, marked her words; albeit some officious blockhead, who just then sauntered up to ask me why I was not dancing and offer me some neglected partner, prevented my hearing more.

"I don't know why I am surprised," thought I, "that my intimacy with Albertine, and the happy hopes to which it has given rise, should

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have excited surmises. To be a mark for vulgar curiosity is the inevitable penalty of possessing such a fortune as mine. For some foolish gossip in Paris to write to another foolish gossip in London that Mr. Wrottesley was seen at the opera with Mrs. Hawley, suffices to create such a report as these two impertinent women are discussing!"

All I gathered further of their dialogue was spoken by the bass voice.

"Don't believe it!" said she; "it is a rumour invented by himself for bad purposes of his own. Sir Robert Hawley may have taken his grandson's widow into his house as a matter of charity. But, depend upon it, he has no more thoughts of making her heiress to his fortune, than of bequeathing it to a lunatic asylum!"—

Full of anxiety to discover the interlocutors in this familiar conversation, I made the best of my way from the tent-like ball-room into the laundry,—I beg its pardon—the ante-room adjoining, which backed upon the spot where I had been sitting. But alas! the doorway was blocked up by a roomy country gentlewoman,

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trying to get up a flirtation for a son nearly as lanky as myself in my Eagle House days, with the fubsy daughter of one of the county members; and by the time I reached the bench where the two gossips had been seated, it was occupied by Mr. Howard Smith, sen., who was talking very heavy stock exchange with a retired share-broker from St. Alban's. To *them* the very name of Mrs. Hawley must have been unknown.

"Nothing the matter, I trust, my dear Mr. Wrottesley?" inquired the Widow Whichcote of Barming, on overhearing imprecations muttered between my teeth; for, not having been let into the secret of the turf transactions between the present representative of her family and Charles Roxborough, the old lady regarded me with reverential gratitude as having conferred a noble piece of preferment on her favourite son. But while I politely released myself from her officious persecution, I became strengthened in my resolution to quit Hentsfield on the morrow. Before the temporary room could be half carted off again, or the copper of the laundry

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reset, I would reach the Chase. Sir Robert should explain himself, — Albertine should explain herself, — and my own explanations reward their candour.

Before the evening was over, however, under the influence of the champagne with which I had been compelled to propose, and do honour to the healths of "the bride and bridegroom," "the fair bridesmaids, and may they shortly become brides,"—"the ladies,"—"the county members," and Heaven knows who or what besides,—I was warmed up into such a fit of hospitality towards one or two of my boyish companions now, like myself, progressed into whiskers and Wellington boots, as actually to invite them to Wrottesley Hall for the 20th, to assist in doing the honours to my tenants: —an engagement which the fame of my preserves would secure from being neglected.— Having turned a deaf ear to Emily's hints that her brother's roof would be a far more respectable shelter for a honeymoon than a Brighton Hotel, in the softness of a maudlin hour I engaged two of the younger Whichcotes, and several brother cricketers of my washed-out

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nankin days, to come and admire my rockets and triumphal arches.

In London, I had already enlisted several of my college friends who fell in my way.—It was not fine people or fashionables I wanted.—Neither banquet nor ball was in preparation. But I disliked the idea of presenting myself to my assembled tenants unbacked by the presence of nearer and younger friends than Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose.

"And now then," said I, half aloud, when, two days after the Hentsfield bridal, I found myself once more approaching the scene of my future glories in the full enjoyment of health, wealth, and my own good opinion, "now then, for the climax of my destinies; for my worthy guardian will unquestionably select the crisis of my coming of age to vacate his seat in Parliament in my favour, and sanction my pretensions to the hand of Albertine. I, at least, have no cause to arraign the *blindness* of fortune! While others go down in the world, or are forced into expatriation, or sell themselves to some heiress in St. Mary Axe,—here am I, with a golden shower perpetually pouring on

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my head,—solicited, by a man who four years ago had never seen my face, to become the husband of one of the loveliest as well as wealthiest women in the kingdom!"

To my usual Castles in the Air was now appended a bower of bliss, such as the most poetical of painters or architects never imagined; and when weary of the perfume of its roses, I amused myself with reconsidering the preliminaries of the forthcoming festivities, which I had settled in my transit through town:—the orchestra I had engaged,—the jovial crew I had invited,—and the extension I had given to the order for the execution of which Gunter was already at work.

Sir Robert received me as though I had been the other Wrottesley revived from the grave, and laughed heartily when I pinned to his no longer old-fashioned coat the silver favour sent him by my sister; while Mrs. Hawley, all smiles and blushes, listened graciously to my account of the Hentsfield festivities, and accepted the offering of a wedding-cake covered with orange blossom, turtle-doves, and true lovers' knots, with which I had taken care to

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provide myself for her behoof. But for the nervousness produced by her mysterious insight into my Hungarian adventures, I might have found courage to throw myself at once at her feet, and remind her of the words of encouragement she had breathed into my ear when we parted in the Rue de Rivoli.—But dreading her arch looks and repartees, I determined to address myself in the first instance to Sir Robert;—who, under the excitement of the approaching event, was as gay as a colt. Neither he, nor his house, nor any thing that was his resembled the Sir Robert, or the Hawley Chase of the preceding year, more than *I* resembled the gawky school-boy whom none but poor old Nicholls delighted to honour.

"I little expected, my dear Harry," said he, when we found ourselves once more alone together over our claret,—"that I should survive to witness your coming of age.—My family misfortunes had so got the better of me at the time of my poor friend Wrottesley's death, that I felt almost angry with him for having delegated to me so serious a charge.—It

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seems however, to have brought a blessing with it. I am stronger, and better, and happier now, than I was then.—But that does not blind me to the fact, Harry, that I have reached the moment appointed for man to find rest from his labours.—My lamp has burnt out its time; and I must look to those whom I would fain have trim it when I am no more."

My face became of course composed to the proper measure of elongation; for I felt that the critical moment was approaching.

"At one time," said he,—"childless and despairing as I was, I thought of letting the law take its course, and leaving my estate to my next of kin. But since (thanks partly to *you*, my dear boy,) I became acquainted with Mrs. Hawley, I determined otherwise.—I hope you will agree with me, Harry, that I cannot better mark my affection for the son and grandson taken from me, than by adopting her whom they so dearly loved!"

"Certainly not, Sir," said I; making my response as clear as that of a parish clerk.

"I have consequently made my will," resumed Sir Robert, "(of which I have

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appointed you sole executor) and bequeathed to the dear angel who has just quitted us, every shilling I possess. I have shackled the bequest with but one condition, Harry," continued he,—smiling like the skies in May:—"a single condition, of which you, at least, will scarcely disapprove. I require her to marry again,—and marry an Englishman. So let us drink health and prosperity to the choice, whoever it may be, of our dear Albertine."

It seemed scarcely fair to pledge him in such a sentiment!—But her inclinations were probably well known to him as to myself; and I would not thwart him. "But though I have made this marriage a testamentary condition," he resumed, "it would of course be a far greater source of happiness to witness its fulfilment during my life-time.—All I desire is to see her happy: and then, close my eyes in peace!"

Could I resist such an appeal? No! after swallowing and making *him* swallow another glass of claret, I proceeded to unfold my views; assuring him that the noble bequest he announced was the only obstacle to my offering my heart and hand to his grand-daughter.

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"Don't talk to me of obstacles," cried the old gentleman, with overbrimming eyes. "Do you suppose I will allow qualms of false delicacy to interfere with the fruition of a scheme which for the last three years has been the sustaining staff of my life? It is precisely because I wish my fortune to become yours, my dear boy, that I have made it hers;—for, from words she has accidentally let fall, Harry, I learned long ago that her affections were pledged before she ever set foot at Hawley Chase! When she admitted the object of her love to be an Englishman, you may imagine my joy in penetrating the secret of her innocent soul."

Whereupon we filled another bumper in honour of her innocent soul; and it was settled between us that, in compliance with the habits of her foreign education, Sir Robert should be the first to acquaint her with my pretensions to her hand.

"Let me alone, Harry,—let me alone!" cried he, chafing together his wan, transparent hands. "You shall find that, in spite of the Archdeacon's saucy assertions, I am not so old yet but

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I can urge a love-plea in a lady's ear,—provided always it be not on my own account. If I only live to witness your mutual happiness, my dear boy, I shall sleep the quieter in my grave!"

A hearty shake of the hand prefaced his departure for the drawing-room; and while I sipped my aromatic coffee alone, I could not but picture to myself the insupportable prolixity with which Sir Robert was delivering himself of a declaration which, had he permitted it, *I* would have concentrated into a single phrase, and communicated in a simple whisper.

The minutes passed on, till they shaped themselves into quarters of an hour; and when at length more than four of these elapsed without bringing my ambassador to announce the triumphant success of his mission, I began to fear that the second bottle of claret had been an imprudence; and that the poor old gentleman might be thicker of speech than was desirable for so delicate an explanation. I grew so fidgetty, that half-a-dozen turns round the room, in double quick time, did not allay my impatience.

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At length the door opened, and Sir Robert re-appeared; but neither elate with wine nor victory. He came slowly towards me, took my hands fondly into his, and looking into my face with eyes which either wine or weeping had nearly swollen out of his head, observed in faltering accents,—"We must not think of it, Harry. There is no hope for you. Of all my disappointments, perhaps, this last is the most irreparable and the most bitter. Her hand and heart are pledged to another!"

If that other, whoever he might be, had found himself in my presence at that moment, a few minutes I really believe would have sufficed to reduce him to atoms. To lose at once the fair object of my choice and the prospects which were to re-establish me on the golden pinnacle from which I had precipitated myself, was too much to be borne! To spare the feelings of my kind old guardian, however, I was forced to put some constraint on my own.

"I feel sadly responsible for your mortification in the business, Harry,"—he persisted, after sinking as if thoroughly exhausted, into his easy

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chair; "for I ought to have been more explicit with her concerning my plans and intentions, before I invited her from a home where she was happy, to place her at the head of this house. But when she came, she seemed so disposed to comply with my wishes, and agreed with me so warmly whenever I spoke in your praise, that I thought myself as sure of a Wrottesley for my successor, (your second son to take the name of Hawley, and succeed, at your death, to the Chase,) as though the marriage were accomplished, and the child already born and playing at my feet."

"My *dear* Sir!" I exclaimed.—But, choked by a variety of emotions, I could not utter another word.

"When I sanctioned her remodelling the house and establishment," he continued, "it was because I knew she was familiar with your tastes, and fancied she was bent on indulging them. And to think that all the time her tacit acquiescence whenever I referred to the probability of her early re-marriage—'re-marriage with an Englishman,'—referred to another! There is one comfort, however, Harry! She has chosen

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a successor for my grandson such as no one can disapprove. The representative of one of the most ancient families in England! I can raise no reasonable objection to a child of *his* assuming my name and filling my place."—

I shuddered.

"It is for *you* only I feel the change," he continued, seizing my hand; "and but that your noble and unencumbered fortune places you beyond all necessity for my assistance, I can scarcely express how much I should be cut up by Mrs. Hawley's determination."

No need for me to inquire the name of this "representative of one of the most ancient families in England!"—Reginald Stormont was the man!—I remembered him ensconced behind her at the opera!—I remembered him on the road, when he drove down Nestor Platicheff to Les Epines!—Above all,—I remembered the allusions made by Count Engelbert at one of our Szent Miklós orgies, to certain old Pisa adventures, which *ought* to have prevented my ever again troubling my head about Mrs. Hawley.

To his correspondence with the latter,

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Hawley Chase was doubtless indebted for its insight into my Hungarian adventures; and it was to his matrimonial engagement with the wealthy Albertine the disappointed mother of Rose Stormont was referring, at the Hentsfield ball, in allusions which my besotted vanity referred wholly to myself.

Whether as Stormont or D'Estomont, the travelled coxcomb had proved my evil genius! His unmeaning homage had rendered poor Dora ridiculous, and reduced his pretty little cousin to despair. At Baden, he had thwarted and piqued me into nearly breaking my neck; at Hawley Chase, he still ran some risk of breaking my heart!—

I had not courage to confront Albertine that night,—the treacherous, *treacherous* Albertine; for I am still convinced that her coquetry towards me was from the first a matter of calculation. Though Sir Robert assured me she was desirous of affording me the most complete explanations and apologies, and appealing to me for the continuance of my friendship, I was determined not to risk being softened by her crocodile tears. I could not

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stand being placed before her in a humiliating light. In spite of all my poor old guardian could say or do,—in spite of frost, snow, and sleet,—I ordered my horse, and on a moonless night, rode over, "splash, splash—tramp, tramp," as impetuously as Leonora's lover, to Wrottesley Hall!

I was wrong. The house was turned topsy-turvy by preparations for the twentieth. The late-lighted fire smoked. The surprised servants appeared to be walking on their heads. It was the first time I had slept in the house since the death of poor old Nicholls; and oh! how I missed the tottering tread of the worthy creature approaching my chamber-door, to ask whether there was any thing I wanted!

For hours, I found it impossible to retire to bed. A confusion of hateful impressions upstarting around me, indicative of the scorns and molestations awaiting me in the world, appeared to "murder sleep." No more Castles in the Air!—If my busy fancy constructed any thing now, it was a cell!—

At length, hoping to escape for a time the smarting of my feelings, I threw myself on my

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pillow; and soon my disturbed dreams proved that something might be more disquieting than my waking thoughts. The visions of Richard in his tent can scarcely have been more painful than mine. First came "my late revered relative,"—the man whom I had never seen, and who always wore to my mind's eye the shapeless yet fearful form represented by my first nightmare under that roof; and scarcely were the reproaches silenced wherein he set before me the vanity and weakness by which I had disgraced his princely bequest, when in glided the mild, beseeching, but admonitory spirit of poor Caroline Roxborough, praying that GOD might forgive me, and bidding me "go and sin no more!"

But the empty silence into which they disappeared, disappeared almost as quickly as themselves. A sneering, mocking crew was close upon them: Platicheff, with his hollow laugh,—Count Engelbert, with his polished irony,—and Zriny, with his aristocratic scorn; surveying me with wonder and contempt, and expressing their amazement that a raw gawky like myself should have dared to enter the lists

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with a man of the world like their mould of fashion, D'Estomont! Methought the open countenance of Crescentia smiled upon me from among them, full of lofty compassion. But the white hands which endeavoured to lead Reginald Stormont into the group of my enemies, were clearly those of Albertine!

At a distance, I heard louder shouts and more confused voices: those of Bob Barker, and Hetton, and Hampden,—who had harnessed Andrew Grove into a sledge and were driving him before them through the snow over which I had just found so much difficulty in making my way. Then came Charles Roxborough, just escaped from the pillory to which he had been sentenced by the jockey-club, and about to ride for the Derby in a black and all black cap and jacket, upon my Hungarian mastiff; while the Archdeacon cheered him on by reading the burial service.

Cold dews began to stream from my face amid the struggles of my spasmodic sleep. I could not stir,—I could not breathe; when lo! the loud acclamations and clapping of hands from the grand stand, as Roxborough brought

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his uncouth racer in gallant style to the post, dispelled the charm by which I was bound. I woke to find a dim grey light peeping in through the curtains, and anxious voices calling upon my name.

An express from Hawley Chase!—"I had not a moment to lose if I wished to see Sir Robert alive!" A line signed "A. H." apprized me that he had been seized with a fit within an hour of my departure; that he was quite insensible; that his medical attendant from Wakefield declared his attack to be apoplectic; but that his faithful old body-servant, who was aware of his having been guilty of a little excess the preceding evening, and undergone a chilling revulsion of feeling shortly afterwards, persisted that his malady was gout thrown into the stomach.

To save time, Mrs. Hawley had been civil enough to send the carriage and horses ready for me to jump into; and I was at the dressing-room door of my poor old friend before the day had fully dawned.

He was still alive, but wholly unconscious. Albertine, seated by the bed-side in her white

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dressing-gown, with the tears stealing silently down her pale cheeks, looked like the angel of mercy come to conduct his soul to bliss; while his attached household, huddled together in the corridor near his chamber door, awaited in sobbing consternation the announcement that all was at an end.

As I had refused, bluntly and ungraciously enough, the last request he ever addressed me, —that I would not depart from his threshold either in sorrow or in anger, but stay and calm down my irritation under his roof, if not for my own sake, for *his*,—I was earnestly in hopes of some parting token of recognition,—a kindly glance from his benignant eye, or a pressure from his wasted hand. But this comfort was denied me. I was aware of having contributed to the agitation of mind which had conveyed his death-blow; and not a sign or symptom could I obtain that my avowals of penitence reached his ears! His eyes were fixed and sightless,—his breathing grew more and more laborious. Though the only remaining evidence of life, one could have almost wished each gasp to be the last, so painful was the effort.

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A moment afterwards, his grand-daughter fell on her knees by his bed-side, sobbing over his wasted hand; and I saw that death had claimed his own. I closed the glassy eyes,—I drew the sheet over his altered face,—I did all that a son of his loins could have done of respectful service; and then withdrew, to leave her to her grief.

"This is the most fortunate piece of business, Mr. Wrottesley!" exclaimed Gripham, when, after the lapse of an hour, he startled me from the reverie into which I had fallen in the great library chair. "Not five days, Sir, since my revered client executed his will; but for which, this fine property would have passed into the hands of comparative strangers!"—

"And so it will *now*!" said I, with saturnine doggedness.

"Pardon me, Sir,—pardon me, my dear Sir:—I cannot call the relative and heir of his valued friend, Francis Wrottesley, a stranger to one who had no immediate kindred surviving.—I was in his secret from the first, Sir. I knew when he sent you to Paris last spring, his motives for proposing the journey. He has

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made you sole executor to his will, Sir, simply that no obstacle may be placed in the way of your immediate marriage with Mrs. Hawley; and I am convinced that could poor Sir Robert address you from the grave, it would be to implore you to lose no time, out of formal deference to his memory, in solemnizing a marriage that fulfils the dearest wishes of his heart."

"*Et tu,*—not *Brute,*—but brute!" thought I. "On every side some vexatious allusion!"

To avoid being maddened by a continuance of such preachments, I told him, in the fewest possible words, the exact state of the case: Mrs. Hawley was affianced to a happier man.

"God bless my soul, Sir!—God bless my soul and body!" ejaculated with great variety of intonation, was all that, for some minutes, poor Gripham could utter in reply. "Why, what will become of you, Sir?—What will ever become of you?—I'm told you're head over ears in debt!—I'm told you've eaten through half a dozen years' income!—I'm told that specious rogue, young Roxborough, has devoured your substance like a locust!"

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"No matter, Mr. Gripham!" was my haughty rejoinder. "From all responsibility touching my distracted affairs, the lapse of the next ten days will release you."

"Why that's the very thing, Sir!" cried the attorney. "Nothing of the kind can be done. You were to have given a formal release to your guardian Sir Robert; and your guardian Sir Robert, having appointed you his sole executor, you will have to give a release to yourself.—And whereabouts am *I*, pray, who have been acting under his authority,—and though sure of *his* sanction and approbation, am by no means so sure of yours!"

"An honest man, Mr. Gripham," said I, "is sure of being equitably judged by an honest man. Meanwhile, I have but one request to make. I am in haste to quit the country.—Let the accounts be laid before me, as previously agreed upon, on Thursday the 18th."

"Quit the country?—Thursday the 18th!" repeated the bewildered lawyer. "Why to-morrow is the 10th, Sir! It will be impossible for Sir Robert Hawley's interment to take place, at soonest, before the 18th!"

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"I think you told me," I rejoined stiffly, "that I was sole executor to his will?"

Gripham, (for Gripham and Co.,) bowed affirmatively.

"The funeral will take place, then, on the 17th," said I, in a resolved manner, "and you will be pleased to give orders accordingly."

Another bow,—but accompanied by something nearly resembling a groan.

"The 18th," I resumed, "must be devoted to our general settlement. You will find me awaiting you at ten o'clock, and at your service for the day. The 19th, I retain for my privacy: I have business of moment to set in order. The 20th, according to the wishes of poor Sir Robert, shall be given up to festivity and rejoicing throughout my estates. But on the 21st I shall again expect you, that I may deliver to you my written discharge; for on the 22nd I take my departure."

"But surely, Sir,—surely, my dear Mr. Wrottesley," cried Gripham, all but breathless with consternation at the Louis XIV. like determination of my tone,—"you would not wish to provoke the disapproval of the neighbourhood,

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—the county,—the borough,—(the borough we hoped you were about to represent, Sir!) by precipitancy in burying the dead, (a man so respected, Sir, as Sir Robert Hawley!) merely that no postponement may occur in the celebration of your coming of age?"

"It is only in accordance with Sir Robert's especial desire, Mr. Gripham, that the 20th of January is to be distinguished from any other day," said I. "I precipitate nothing.—I allow things to take their course; and henceforth trust to be as little an object of solicitude to what you term the neighbourhood, as the neighbourhood is to me."

"Do you mean that you are not going to stand for the borough?—That you are not about to reside at the Hall?" cried the attorney, with irrepressible eagerness.

"No time must be lost," said I, loftily evading the question, "in giving orders for the funeral of poor Sir Robert.—When the arrangements are completed, Mr. Gripham, I shall be happy to hear from you at Wrottesley Hall."

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CHAPTER VIII.

With his spirit, sadly I survive,
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out
Rotten opinion, which hath writ me down
After my seeming.

SHAKSPEARE.

I REPROACHED myself afterwards, for having quitted the house without seeking an interview with Mrs. Hawley. A few kindly words spoken between us, at such a juncture, would have made us friends for ever. Whereas, intimidated by Gripham's representations of my ire, she sent for Lord and Lady John Jocelyn to advise and comfort her; and on the following morning, I was waited upon by the former to suggest, in a civil but constrained manner, that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, Sir Robert Hawley's will should be opened and

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read without further delay, lest it might contain instructions concerning his place of interment.

I replied, haughtily I am certain, uncivilly I am afraid, that to have treated personally with a lady to whom I owed so much respect as Mrs. Hawley, would have insured compliance with her wishes. But that as messages sent through a third person bore always more or less a hostile character, I begged to refer his Lordship, as her delegate, to my own representative, Mr. Gripham.

It was accordingly arranged that the will should be read, neither at Wrottesley nor at the Chase, (where I had sworn never to set foot again,) but at the office of Messrs. Gripham, Klose, and Sneak, where it was deposited: Lord John Jocelyn representing on the occasion the interests of Sir Robert Hawley's grand-daughter-in-law.

Sorry enough was I, however, for having acquiesced in the scheme, when, as Gripham pompously recited the luckless document of his own drawing out, my ears were made to tingle with shame at repeated allusions to "the said Albertine Sophie Ghislaine Hawley's intended

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marriage with the said Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley," and to "the second, third, or any succeeding son, lawful issue of the said marriage." Conscious that Lord John was as well aware as myself and the attorneys to the estate, that my poor old guardian had deluded himself into building Castles in the Air quite as devoid of foundation as any of my creation, I could not doubt that, though he preserved a decent gravity of visage, he was enjoying a secret chuckle over my discomfiture.

At the close of the recital, I cleared my voice, (and would have given worlds to clear my vision, for on entering I had been ass enough to accept Gripham's offer of a glass of sherry after my cold ride, which, consisting of seven eighths of alcohol to one part of wine, redoubled the nervous sensations I hoped it would overcome;) —and coldly declined accepting the executorship of the will, to which Mrs. Hawley, as residuary legatee, might administer. "As I was about to quit the country," I said, "my officiating in the affair would be the source of great inconvenience and delay."

"Had not Sir Robert conceived himself to

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be delegating to my hands the care of *my own* interests," said I, "he would doubtless have selected a more experienced executor. But as on that point he was deceived,—whether wilfully deceived or not, I will not pause to inquire,—I leave to those who have secured the enjoyment of his property, the trouble of its protection."

"I could wish, Mr. Wrottesley," rejoined Lord John, who, though little more than a year older than myself in age, was twenty years my superior in deportment and self-possession, "I could wish for all our sakes that you would take time to reconsider this resolution. The first irritation of disappointment in the affections of such a woman as Mrs. Hawley, (not a word of the Hawley Chase estates, hang him! though I should have liked to see even a son of the Duke of Sheffield, renounce them without a twinge!) naturally indisposes you to much exertion in her behalf."

"Your Lordship must pardon me," cried I, interrupting him. "For Mrs. Hawley, or in deference to the memory of my guardian, there

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is *no* trouble I should scruple to undertake. But to have to defer to the approval of a man like Mr. Stormont, with whom I am on terms of scarcely friendly acquaintance, is an annoyance to which I do not feel myself called upon to submit."

I was beginning to talk louder and thicker, as by degrees Gripham's sherry at thirty shillings per dozen, kindled a fire in my eyes and brain. Nor was the exacerbation of my feelings cooled down by the provoking *sang froid* of Lord John.

"I must again, and as a personal favour entreat you, Mr. Wrottesley," said he, "to reconsider the subject. The line of conduct you announce, appears to throw down the gauntlet to the Hawley family and interest—"

"Precisely. I consider myself wholly dissevered from both, and mean to mark it to the world."

"Which amounts to renouncing their support at the forthcoming election!" interrupted Lord John. "Aware as I am of my late respected friend Sir Robert's intention that you should represent his borough whenever his death

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vacated the seat, nothing would have induced me to exercise an adverse political influence over the nomination of the successor to his estates, so long as you were likely to remain in this country, and discharge the duties of one of its public servants. But I fairly warn you that I shall consider myself enfranchised in this respect by the line of conduct you announce."

I was now furious. Envy, hatred, malice, jealousy, disappointment and cheap sherry, held ascendancy over my soul and body. In reply to the manly warning of Lord John, I said a great deal I had better have left unsaid, and did a great deal I had better have left undone; so that we parted with sentiments of mutual displeasure and disgust. As to Gripham, he was struck dumb. He no longer recognized his gawky and supine client.

The day appointed for the funeral arrived; and to absent myself from the solemn ceremony, was a mark of disrespect to the memory of poor dear Sir Robert, of which fifty times my amount of personal vexation would not have made me guilty. I did not, however, enter the house; but stepped

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straight from my horse into a mourning coach; and as, in the absence of any acting executor, the marshalling of the mourners was left to the undertaker who presided over the arrangements, I had the fortune to find myself included in the same carriage with Lord Meadowley and Dr. Temple. The one was a stranger,—the other a worse than stranger. But, overcome by emotion at beholding the coffin of my beloved old friend borne out of a house where I had received so much kindness, and which I had sworn never to enter again, there was no need for a better understanding between us. The bow of recognition which passed between me and the Rector having apprized Lord Meadowley that we were acquainted, he requested an introduction; and accosted me with a sincere tribute of praise to the memory of him we were following to the grave; but finding that I raised neither eye or voice in reply, he respected the perturbation of my feelings; and we arrived in silence within sound of the solemn bell which thrilled the very marrow in my bones as its hollow voice summoned another Christian to his rest.

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I entered the church in the state of feeling in which every man ought to enter a church on such an occasion,—full of tender regrets and humble sorrow. But when I saw arrayed in scarfs and hat-bands in the aisle as the representatives of Mrs. Hawley's affliction, the Right Honourable Lord John Jocelyn and Reginald Stormont who was domiciled at the Elms as his guest, my heart hardened. Forgetting *whose* venerable remains were sheltered by the solemn pall I gazed on, I cursed the two chief mourners in my heart, as leagued enemies of my peace.

Not a syllable of the holy words which had formerly seemed so impressive from the lips of Dr. Temple, on the present occasion reached my ears. It was a relief when the service was over,—a still greater when I found that the Rector intended to stay and preside over the closing of the vault;—for Lord Meadowley was too completely a stranger, for *his* presence to be a restraint.

I trust you will agree with me, sapient reader, that there is a species of man in England to whom every interest in life is

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subsidiary to that of political jobbing. Lord Meadowley, for instance, though conscientious and gentlemanly, was too completely a party-man to pass over so good an occasion for ascertaining whether strength would be added or lost to his cause, by the death of Sir Robert. After adverting with regret to the habitual ill health which had prevented the Whigs from deriving all the good they had a right to expect from the services of my late guardian, he expressed a hope that one so young and active as myself, might be disposed to make amends for the past.

"Sir Robert has bequeathed his property I find, to his grandson's handsome widow," observed his Lordship: "probably as an act of expiation. Our late friend was one of the vindictive many who, when those belonging to them choose to be happy in their own way spare no pains to make them miserable; and I can understand the feeling which, in his last moments, prompted Sir Robert to make atonement to the sole survivor of his banished son. Mrs. Hawley it is true will take the estate with her into another family; but she will give him

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heirs more likely to do credit to his name (which her second son, it seems, is to assume,) than the distant kinsman whose opinions, religious and political, were so offensive to the poor old gentleman."

He paused; and my eyes being still fixed on the cheerless landscape, he had a right to suppose that I was listening.

"From my Lord John Jocelyn's account," continued he, somewhat superciliously, "the young widow's choice met with Sir Robert's perfect approbation. The happy man officiated to-day as one of the chief mourners, — a gentlemanly-looking person, and said to belong to one of our ancient Norman families."

"Nephew and heir to Sir Thomas Stormont, of Crowsden Grange," said I, with pragmatical exactness, by way of proving my attention.

"In that case," rejoined Lord Meadowley, "I congratulate Mrs. Hawley on becoming the wife of one whose position proves him to be above making an interested marriage."

Not having forgotten Reginald Stormont's attentions to my sister when he believed her

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to be a co-heiress, to Mélanie de Bonval, when she was the highest prize in the wheel—and to Albertine, from the moment he knew that Sir Robert's splendid fortune was to be added to the inheritance of Monsieur Des Auliers, any very lively demonstration of assent was impossible.

"But though I rejoice to find we are about to have a young man of such excellent descent and connections established at the Chase," he continued, "I see no reason why Sir Robert's interest and influence should not fructify the ground he had selected for their exercise. We all know, Mr. Wrottesley, that it was his wish you should succeed him in parliament; and both as his friend and the friend of your late revered relative, Francis Wrottesley, it would give me pleasure, Sir, *real* pleasure,—to propose you on the hustings of * * *"

I thanked him as formally as his pomposity demanded: but replied in terms too decided to be mistaken that I had no desire to enter upon public life.

"Yet Sir Robert himself assured me," he exclaimed, "that you entertained the highest

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political ambitions: that you looked forward to becoming a leading member of our party!"

"Those who are prone to looking forward my Lord," said I, "sometimes exhaust their energies by mere force of anticipation. Now that the moment for launching myself is arrived I prefer an easier and happier life on shore."

Let me spare my readers his Lordship's dignified remonstrances and my own petulant rejoinders! Suffice it I left him, his party and the borough, to the hands of Stormont and Lord John:—the former being a quasi Tory, the later a schismatic whig. I spare them also the bitter ruminations which occupied the intermediate day I had insisted upon for my private leisure. Next morning came Gripham and his clerk, bringing accounts and files of figures enough to cover an acre of land; yet the whole of which I went through, with a patience and method that would have rejoiced the heart of my old writing master at Eagle House. My zeal enabled me to detect errors to the amount of a few paltry hundred pounds, in an account of tens of tens of thousands. But there was no error to be detected in one item which sorely

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moved my spleen: *viz.* a sum due to the firm of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak and Klose for professional service during the last three years, stamps, fees and disbursements, to the amount of £7,347 4*s* 8½*d.*

After carefully auditing the accounts, an operation of many hours' duration, I requested the balance sheet might be left with me, as well as a copy of the release which, on the day succeeding my majority, that is, the day after the morrow, I was to sign; and politely bowed out the aggressors. Time enough to inform them, when this important document was legalized, that I demanded three months for the disbursement of the sum demanded; in the course of which, I intended clearing off every guinea of my liabilities by mortgages or judicious sales, under the advice of new men of business and an auditor of my own selection.

It was my intention to propose to Andrew Grove, who at my last visit to town I had ascertained to be residing in Lambeth as junior partner in an engineering firm of some celebrity, to undertake the management of my property, (the chief value of which consisted in mines

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which had been shamefully neglected,) with a salary of a thousand per annum, and a handsome house on the estate; and prospered by so intelligent a viceroy, I indulged vague expectations of becoming as rich as Crœsus.

The reader, having no great grounds for faith in my veracity, will perhaps discredit me when I swear that, in the confusion of mind arising from the succession of emotions to which I had been exposed, my invitation to my young friends in London to assist in the general uproar which was to certify to the county that Wrottesley Wrottesley was his own master, had wholly escaped my memory. They did not however the less make their appearance. The mail, the heavy coach, and a succession of post-chaises, brought down a heterogeneous throng, who looked as if they had fallen together from the skies, like the walking gentlemen engaged to fill the stage in a pantomime.

After the momentary startle of their arrival, I was rather glad of than sorry for the interruption. Any thing to escape from myself!—Any thing to escape from the past!—Sur-

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rounded by my little train of courtiers, my fallen countenance might escape the notice of the vulgar. As to preparation for their reception, the Hall resembled just then a first rate inn. Willis of the Thatched House, abetted by the cooks of the Black Swan at York, had undertaken the feasting department; the plate-closets and cellars had been opened in my presence by Gripham, Klose, and Sneak; and since the days of the wedding banquet of Ricquet with the Tuft, never had there been such cracking of marrow-bones or swearing of cooks. While feeling somewhat like a guest in my own house, I had no difficulty in making my visitors thoroughly at home. My mourning suit afforded sufficient excuse for my want of spirits; but from the moment the champagne began to circulate, no further excuse was wanting. In the desperation of my forced mirth, I jested,—laughed,—drank,—sang,—raved. It is only justice to the party to declare, that not a soul among us went sober to bed.

A mighty pleasant thing after such an orgie, to be roused up at daybreak by volleys of

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musketry and a field piece or two, discharged to tell you that the day of your twenty-first birthday is dawning; or, after swearing your fill and turning round upon your pillow, to be prevented resuming your rest by the din and discordance of a village band—bassoon and serpents included. The Wrottesley peasantry exhibited their affection for me by scraping and bellowing "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," and "Hearts of Oak," till I could have found it in my heart to commit tenanticide, with full security that the circumstances were extenuating.

As we had sat up singing and drinking in a style that the Honourable Blank Blank would not have disavowed, till near daylight, it was rather early for more crotchets and quavers! But sleep being out of the question and soda and seltzer water much in request, we contrived to have breakfasted by twelve o'clock, so as to welcome the mounted deputation of my tenantry of a higher class; who came with silken banners bearing appropriate devices, to bid me, like an Eastern Sultan, "Live for ever." And after more speechifying than I could listen to with

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patience, we proceeded together to visit the roasting and distribution of the ox,—one of the nastiest exhibitions, by the way, I ever witnessed.

In spite of the severity of the weather, games and races for the villagers followed; and a match was skated upon the lake, which would have done honour to Haarlem or Amsterdam. It was not alone my own tenants who were entertained. Country people from far and near came flocking into the Park;—from Roxborough,—from (Heaven forgive them) Hawley Chase.—It was a long time since any thing like a public festival had occurred in the neighbourhood; and they were determined that the echoes of Wrottesley Hall, so long dormant, should be roused up right royally at last.

The more uproar,—the more hurraing,—the more eating and drinking,—the better I was pleased. The tumult could not be too great. I was only sorry that it was not extended so as to shake the eaves of Hawley Chase; where, I doubted not that Albertine and her affianced lover were seated together; triumphing in the fruition of their nefarious

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schemes. And though the cause of my reckless spirits was unsuspected, I was amply seconded by my visitors;—choice spirits, well qualified to promote joviality and mirth. When I opened the ball with one of my tenants' daughters, in the great hall gorgeously decorated for the occasion with evergreens and banners, they cheerfully followed my example; after which fatiguing operation, we retired to the dining-room, and renewed, on a more refined scale, the pleasures over which we had been presiding since noon.

Had a single moment been allowed me for reflection, what bat-like thoughts would have flitted through the twilight of my mind!—Of those most endeared to me since the first ill-omened day of my setting foot in Wrottesley Hall, the kindest, the fairest, and the most faithful had sunk into the grave;—if not laid there by my hand, at least hastened by my ministry. And now they were gone, whom was I to cling to, in their stead? What friends had I cultivated,—what kinsfolk had I conciliated,—what dependants had I attached,—what credit had I won? Who was there to

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care whether I were cut off by the will of Sir Robert Hawley, or deplore my self-sacrifice in renouncing all further connection with the best interests of my native land? Not one,—no, *not one!*—Dr. Temple regarded me indeed with a pitying eye; and my mother and sisters were proud of me as of some fine state garment, which it gratified them to think of as laid by in a chest, to be drawn forth on high-days and holidays. But there existed none to whose happiness it sufficed to hold my hand in theirs; or who, on hearing that disaster had befallen me, would turn aside their heads and weep!—

No matter!—A princely board, surrounded by applauding parasites, was spread before me. Wine, rendered nectar by time, was sparkling like a topaz or gleaming like a ruby in every glass. A sunlike flood of light irradiated a table groaning under the ancient family plate of the Wrottesleys, till it reminded one of the pictured gorgeousness of Belshazzar's feast.

"Of all this," thought my vindictive soul, which the unaccustomed fumes of Amontillado and Val de Penas, were beginning to inflate

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even to bursting,—"of all this, neither the insolence of my aristocratic neighbours, nor the malice of an artful woman, can deprive me. Under this roof, and master of all that gilds and brightens the plodding ways of life, I am still entitled to render back scorn for scorn. Why should I quit the kingdom, when *here* I command new means,—unheard-of means, —of human enjoyment?—No, no—I will lead the life of a Satrap.—My bowl shall be crowned with flowers, and soft music aid the process of digestion, in place of the heavy political discussions which appropriately accompany the unctuous turtle and reeking haunches of what England calls society. If even these refined enjoyments fail to stimulate the flagging blood in my veins, to new pleasures shall succeed new illusions. The brilliancy of Wrottesley Hall need not blind me to the still brighter effulgence of my Castles in the Air."

With what preposterous aspirings wine and the excitement of a moment unique in a man's life, might have inspired me, it were vain to guess. Just as the dessert was placed on table, a whisper in my ear from Willis, requesting

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my immediate attention to a note which he placed in my hand, put a sudden close to my vagaries; and the two obsequious *bon-vivants* by whom my chair was supported, conceiving perhaps that a *billet* forced upon my notice at such a moment could only be a *billet-doux*, discreetly turned to gossip with their neighbours, leaving me to the undisturbed perusal of my dispatch.

A chilling presentiment convinced *me*, on the contrary, that it contained disagreeable intelligence; and being resolved that not a cloud should obscure the factitious light in which I was luxuriating, I filled a goblet of claret to the brim, and was about to make an end of the note according to the song, by "drowning it in the bowl," when the sight of the handwriting of the good Archdeacon arrested my hand;—and though, on tearing it open and finding it dated from "Wrottesley Parsonage," I felt half inclined to renew my project of immersion, the initials R. R. at the foot of the page again bespoke my respect.

"I am too much vexed by all I have been

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hearing about you lately to come near you," was the abrupt apostrophe of my old friend. —"But I have just received intelligence from town which it is indispensable you should learn. I have it from my poor cousin Gratian, (who is under engagements to his worthless son to hold no communication with yourself,) that a writ will be obtained against you at the suit of a blackguard money-lender, named Shadrach, or so commonly called; and that an execution will be put into your house in the course of the week, by another rascal of the name of Snettering. Be on your guard, Harry; for I have reason to know that among the crowd of vagabonds who are this night making a bear garden of the old Hall (before your excellent friend Sir Robert is cold in his grave!) *are two sheriff's officers!*

"Your friend,

"R. R."

The shock sobered me, but it did not make me wiser. Instead of waiting for the proposal of my health, which, since I was in the humour for speechifying, would have afforded me some

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pretext for making an ass of myself, I rose, amid the wonderment of some and the vehement acclamations of the rest, and proclaimed the exact state of the case. "Sheriff's officers were lying in ambush in my house to serve a writ obtained at the suit of a rogue known by name to them all, and by persecution, perhaps, to more than one,—Shadrach the money lender."

A groan of execration saluted the name.—For what dissolute young fellow between twenty and twenty-five, but shudders at mere mention of a Jew,—the unclean thing entailed as a penalty upon his vices!—

Encouraged by this general sympathy and fevered by rage and wine, I proceeded to inform them that of the sum claimed by Shadrach, I had been defrauded by the cunning of an individual holding the highest place among gentlemen, but better entitled to the highest among rascals; who, after cheating his old father, his innocent sisters, and in the present instance, his trusting friend, was the hand-in-hand companion of princes, and favoured guest of half the lords in the land;—slippery on the

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turf,—slippery at the gaming-table,—slippery wherever the ring of coin was audible, or the letters I. O. U. held tantamount to L. S. D.; but steady as a rock where polished impudence passed current under the name of fashion:—Charles Roxborough—no longer of Roxborough Elms.—

As scarcely one among the coarse *roués* I was addressing but had been made to smart, at one moment or other, under the insolence of the man I accused, or had suffered still more positively from the result of his crooked policy on the turf,—(where, for the honour of British sport and integrity, policy should never be allowed to find footing,)—my words were caught up with enthusiasm. The responsibility of the denunciation lying with myself, all were eager to declare their long-standing mistrust of a man who had secured for himself a comfortable income out of his gains, by the purchase of an annuity;—leaving his losses to be made up at the cost of his family and friends.

After venting their displeasure on the name of the originator of my tribulations, my friend Hetton—a bolder braggart than the rest—rose,

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as well as holding by the back of his chair enabled him to perform the feat, and proposed, as distinctly as Champagne and Burgundy admitted of his making the proposal, that, after another half-dozen bottles, we should commence a search after the enemy.

"Wrottesley has given us an account," said he, "of his bear-hunting, and boar-hunting, and wolf-hunting, and—and all sorts of hunting. But he can afford us better sport on his own premises than all these confounded battues put together. I've a notion bailiff-hunting must beat badger-hunting to shivers!"

"Bravo, bravo!—A bailiff-hunt, a bailiff-hunt!" shouted the rest.—And before I could modify their drunken ardour, each seized a sconce from the candelabra ornamenting the table; and away they went, like mad,—tumbling one over the other,—rushing from room to room through the apartments, and ascending the great staircase in lawless confusion; some with the notion of being in at the death of a bailiff; others, still further gone in drunkenness, without any other notion or capability than that of adding to the uproar.

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"For the Almighty's sake, Mr. Wrottesley, Sir, put an end to this!"—cried the breathless Gripham, who, at the first outbreak had been hastily fetched to the scene of confusion by the mild and discreet Willis;—"consider, Sir, the impression such conduct will make in the county!"—

I devoted the county to a fate, which, considering its size and population, was somewhat alarming.—But what was the county to *me?*

"Your tenantry, then, Sir; to whom you owe an example;—respectable men, who have trusted their families under your roof, and whom you are about to insult and exasperate to gratify the antics of a drunken rabble."

I was taking serious thought about flinging my officious monitor down stairs; when the mad cries of my companions, who, having reached the corridor above, were calling upon me to follow them and not leave a door unbroken till we unearthed the skulking myrmidons of the villain Shadrach,—afforded some colouring to his exclamation of—"They are

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blind drunk, Sir!—They are no longer responsible beings.—If once they enter the bed-rooms, they will burn down the house!"—

A gleam of reason yet remained to me.—"Run round by the back staircase, then, Gripham," said I, "and close the iron door which shuts off the eastern wing. We must prevent their dispersing over the house, or molesting the tenants in the hall."

And while he scuffled off to execute my orders, I hastened to join the party in the corridor above;—no easy task, by the way, for of the eighteen or twenty engaged in the pursuit, ten, at least, were scattered among the chambers, where, having stumbled in the dark, they lay shouting for help. But after gathering them together, I thought fit to announce that the enemy was captured and safely lodged under bolt and bar in my justice-room; so that we were at leisure to repair to the billiard-room which was lighted up for our use, with card-tables set in the adjoining saloon.

As they were in the mood to be diverted from whatever pursuit they were following on the temptation of a new object, my proposal was

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greeted with loud applause. "To the billiard-room,—to the billiard-room!" was the general cry. But as two of the party, (one of the Whichcotes and a young man named Halliwell, the only son of one of my mother's opulent Hertfordshire neighbours,) were voted incapable of joining us, we placed the former on his bed, and the latter on a sofa in the adjoining dressing-room to sleep off their wine, and grow sober at leisure. Lest they should stumble down stairs after us, however, and get into mischief, I turned the key of the door upon them ere I followed my rabble rout.

A pool at billiards, played as I have never seen billiards played except at Cambridge, or after such a bout as we had been indulging in, soon absorbed our attention: a few of the party breaking off into the adjoining saloon for a game at Blind hookey, or Cockamaroo. After the storm, a lull was not unacceptable. Having shouted ourselves hoarse, and raved ourselves out of breath, we were disposed to commit what further follies remained for us to do with a drunken stolidity worthy the gravity of a Spanish Hidalgo.

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For more than half an hour, nothing was audible but the click of the billiard-balls, and an occasional ejaculation of warning when some fellow, more drunk than the rest, overbalanced himself on his chair. When lo! an alarming sound, accompanied by sudden cries and hurrying footsteps!—The alarum of the turret-clock was ringing, accompanied by the awe-striking monosyllable of "FIRE!"—

I rushed to the window,—flung aside the heavy curtains,—threw up the ponderous sash. A smell of burning instantly pervaded the room. And no wonder. Groups of bare-headed people escaped from the ball-room who crowded the lawn, shrieking, vociferating, and intent only on escape, were thrown into frightful relief upon the snow that covered the ground, by the reflection of an unnatural light apparently proceeding from the attics, which grew redder and redder every moment.

On leaning out, and turning my face anxiously upwards, I perceived a burst of flame from two windows on the bed-room story; which, in the consternation of the moment, appeared to lie in the direction of

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those belonging to young Whichcote's bed-chamber !—

And all the time, the alarum bell continued to ring out with terrible earnestness ; while hundreds and hundreds of voices took up the fearful cry of FIRE !"—

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CHAPTER IX.

The legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived,
And soon to be supplanted.

COWPER.

What cometh? Behold! without menace or call
Who writes with the lightning's bright hand on the wall?
What pierceth the host like the point of a dart,
What drives the bold blood from his cheek to his heart?—

My first impulse was to rush to the scene of danger. I was probably the only person cognizant of those two wretched victims being locked into their room. On the threshold of the billiard-room, I met Gripham, ghastly with affright;—who detained me to say he had despatched expresses to Wakefield, the Elms, the Chase, for engines and succour. In the impression that malefactors had got into the house under cover of the rejoicings, and set fire

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to it for purposes of plunder, he kept calling upon all and sundry to rescue the family plate, and save the fine old pictures. But when he found me tearing away towards the upper story which was known to be in flames, he attached himself with such vehemence to my person, that it was with the loss of one of my skirts I escaped from his grasp, and hurried up the second flight of stairs, now nearly impassable from smoke.

To enable me to reach the fatal spot, I stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth. Another moment and I flung open the door of Whichcote's room,—prepared to be overcome by an outburst of flame. But no! a single glance convinced me I was mistaken. The room was filled with smoke; but the fire had not yet reached it. On the contrary, I could hear the roar of the raging element in the direction of the eastern wing; the iron doors dividing which from the corridor were fortunately still closed.

By the fluctuation of the smoke in the room where I was standing, I perceived that the windows were open; and to the sill of one of them hung poor Halliwell, who, half wild with

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terror, was on the point of throwing himself out when I grasped him and dragged him back into the room. His next impulse was to dart through the door against which he had been contusing and bruising himself in the vain hope of breaking it open. But I could not let him off till I had ascertained the fate of Whichcote, whom, at first, I supposed to have flung himself from the window; and on finding him still stretched on the bed in a state of insensibility, I contrived, as well as the increasing density of the atmosphere and Halliwell's stupefaction would permit, to obtain *his* assistance in carrying his companion down stairs.

To tear him from the bed and hoist him between us, was the work of a moment. But when we reached the corridor, the frame-work of the iron door having taken fire and given way, the flames were bursting through as it hung nearly red hot from its hinges, and the passage we were leaving was oppressive as the heat of a lime-kiln.

Shall I ever forget the horror of that moment:—the stifling sensation,—the feeling of being pursued by an implacable element as

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we staggered with our heavy burthen in our arms, and perspiration pouring from our faces, down the staircase where a lurid glare contended with volumes of smoke! As we reached the landing of the first floor, the sound of voices calling upon my name luckily encouraged me to proceed,—for I was on the point of sinking from exhaustion.—But just as I was about to fall, my load was snatched out of my arms by a pair far more muscular than mine; and I found myself dragged onwards, unresistingly, by two stout farming men; who, under Gripham's directions, deposited me in safety upon the lawn.

When I recovered from my syncope, a crowd was swarming about me: and well do I remember the delicious sensation of the chill night air, circling me round like a cold bath and pouring refreshment into my excoriated lungs.

"Where are Whichcote and Halliwell?" muttered I, as soon as I regained my powers of speech.

"Safe, Sir,—safe with the rest of the gentlefolks in the offices by the stable-yard," cried one of my men, as he hurried off, on a summons

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from Gripham, to assist in working our house-engine, already actively in play on the burning wing.

"God bless you, Sir,—God bless you, Mr. Wrottesley!" cried a chorus of rough voices,—from such of my tenants as, apprized of my danger, had watched till they saw me released from a peril incurred in preserving the life of a fellow-creature.

But having swallowed the glass of water presented to me, and come completely to myself, I had only to hasten off into fresh danger. It was not for me, the owner of that burning pile, to be resting, while hundreds were exerting themselves in my behalf. In a moment, I was at the engines. But the supply of water from the house was already exhausted. A chain of buckets was made. But alas! the lake was frozen: and when at length the ice was broken, the density of the cold numbed the hands of the assistants and retarded their progress.

A sonorous voice, to which the crowd seemed to yield attention, suggested at this juncture that the rooms between the burning staircase, and the library and saloon, should be pulled

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down by the workmen present, to secure their valuable contents from the progress of the fire. It was that of Dr. Temple.—A moment afterwards, I saw the Archdeacon assisting in conveying from the vestibule to the coach-house, an antique group for which the father of my godfather was known to have paid thousands of pounds to some Italian Cardinal. Both had hurried to the Hall, on learning from the servant who had ridden over with the letter, (the remote cause of all that had occurred,) the breaking out of the fire; and the influence of the good Rector over his flock proved the means of rescuing from their blundering assiduity, innumerable objects of value. Wherever I turned, I met one or other of these zealous friends,—directing, advising, or slaving hand and foot in my behalf.

It was thanks to their judicious authority that any thing,—little enough, however,—was preserved out of the wreck! The yeomanry-cavalry, when at last they made their appearance for the purpose of keeping order, added materially to the confusion of a scene in which none but experienced firemen, nerved into pre-

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sence of mind by force of habit, ever render efficient assistance. After cutting pictures from their frames and flinging marble chimney-pieces out of window for their preservation, they ended by an act of dauntless bravery which was very near costing me my life; by penetrating into the interior of the house when the conflagration was at its hottest, for the rescue of three chests of family plate, for the saving of which a reward was most indiscreetly offered by Gripham.

Two of these heavy chests were brought out and deposited on the lawn, amidst the cheering of such as judged it pleasanter to play the part of spectators. But on noticing the scorched and singed state of the poor fellows who for a bribe of twenty pounds had been tempted to risk their lives, I inquired anxiously concerning the bearers of the third chest, who, having entered the house with them, ought to have been close upon their heels.

But the third chest, it appeared, was not forthcoming at the place pointed out by Gripham; and the men had been mad enough to venture further in search of it,—in a strange place, where the windings of the passages were

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hard to make out, even by those whose senses were collected.

"They will lose themselves to a certainty!" cried I.—"What madness to attempt it!"

"A twenty pun' note, Squoire, be a blessed matter to coom to a mon like Hodge Watson, wi' noine childern looking to him for bread!" cried one of their comrades. But at the announcement of the danger of a father of nine children, I was off like a shot! All the caskets of diamonds in the United Kingdom would not have tempted me again into the furnace.—But the idea of two poor fellows losing their lives to save my worthless epergnes and soup-tureens, when a word shouted to them might save them, urged me on. The basement story traversed by freer currents of air than the floors above, was of course easier to penetrate; and with my coat flung over my head, I even ventured to rush into the great hall, where the festive lights were still burning quietly on the walls, though the flames had reached the gallery above and cast every moment burning fragments on the highly dry-rubbed floor, converted into the semblance of burning naphtha by the reflection.

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All was glare, suffocation, and confusion. The intense heat seemed to dry up my blood and penetrate my very brain. I almost forgot the purpose that brought me thither. But again, as before, I heard my name lustily called upon; and hastily retraced my steps and reached the outer air, at the very moment the roof of the hall fell in, involving every thing in ruin.

By this sudden compression of the burning mass, the flames and smoke were probably forced into the adjoining passages; for I had a hard matter to struggle forth into the air; and in my transit received so severe a cut on the temple, either from rushing against some angle, or from a falling beam, that my clothes were saturated with blood.

All that followed I leave to the imagination of the reader; for my own senses wholly deserted me. I have a vague recollection of being carried along through the cold air in a recumbent position, and of the friendly voice of the Archdeacon exhorting me to fortitude; but nothing further. More than four-and-twenty hours elapsed before I became conscious of

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being in a strange bed, in a state of great bodily suffering; many days, before I could be apprized that I had been in imminent peril of my life, and that I was an inmate of Wrottesley Rectory.

The Hall,—(they told it me gradually, and as if preparing me for the death of a relation!) —the Hall was a heap of ruins; of which the two leading County Insurance Companies were in possession. But no lives had been lost. Several persons had suffered severely. One of the yeomanry privates had been in still greater agony and danger than myself. But there was no loss of life upon my conscience. My guests had hurried back to town. My family, duly communicated with by Dr. Temple, were prevented from attending upon me only by knowing me to be a guest in a house where their arrival would be a great inconvenience. Mrs. Hawley, the John Jocelyns, every neighbour of mark or consideration had been unwearied in inquiries after my improvement; and I perceived with gratification by the affectionate tone in which all this was announced to me by the Archdeacon, and confirmed by the soberer testi-

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mony of Doctor Temple, that their kindness towards me arose less from compassion towards the great calamity which had befallen me, than from the manner in which they had seen me exert myself under its pressure.

There was one person who appeared nearly as much to be pitied as myself.—Gripham, who, at my desire, had left in the audit-room exclusively devoted to his use, and of which the key was in his custody, all the papers and documents verifying the accounts, in virtue of which I was to furnish him with a release on the morrow, had no longer so much as the tinder of a voucher to make out his claim!—For considerable payments, it would of course be easy to procure new receipts. But for thousands of pounds, this would be impossible; and the poor wretch felt himself completely at my mercy.

From my careless mode of life, he naturally concluded I had taken little heed of the debtor and creditor account between us. But he was mistaken. The balance against me was so much less than I expected,—thanks to the fluctuating state of the mine-market, and a

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variety of securities belonging to my late revered relative which my boyish calculations had never yet added to the amount of my personalty,—that the gross sums were indelibly impressed on my memory. As soon, therefore, as I could speak collectedly, I requested Dr. Temple to instruct him to draw out a second release; by which, holding myself accountable for the balance in question, I was ready to sign a general discharge.

By the air of satisfaction with which the commission was accepted by the Doctor, and the grateful thanks despatched to me by Gripham, (who from injuries received at the fire was still too ill to leave his room) I clearly perceived that the tutorage of Charles Roxborough was supposed to have rendered me unworthy the trust and fellowship of honest men.

By degrees, I was apprized that a writ had been served on my person which would have lodged me in York Castle, had not the Archdeacon and the Doctor put in bail; and Charles Roxborough's sharp-shooting attorney had been down to insist upon a personal interview, which nothing but a certificate of my danger from my

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medical attendants prevented his obtaining by force.

I was as yet scarcely strong enough to contend with these contrarieties; still less, to hear with patience the intelligence communicated by the Archdeacon that the new Rector of Rainham, being on a visit to his friend Lord John Jocelyn at the moment I signified my refusal to replace Sir Robert Hawley in Parliament, had suggested for the vacant seat his elder brother; who, having lately succeeded to the Barming estate, was desirous of figuring as an M.P. Thanks to the difficulty of providing a satisfactory candidate at a moment's notice, the proposition was accepted; and to the indignation of the liberal inhabitants of a borough at that time as mere a portion of the Hawley property as the four walls of the Chase, the new member was proposed by Courtfield of Courtfield, seconded by Lord John Jocelyn, and of course returned without opposition.—Stormont had previously declined the seat; unwilling to shackle his roving propensities by the responsibilities of parliamentary life. But Reginald the traveller would have been almost

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more unacceptable to me, than Whichcote the fox-hunter!

"Conceive, my dear Harry, poor Sir Robert's sensations, could he have anticipated a rank Tory occupying his place!" cried the Archdeacon, when we talked it over. "Could I have supposed that little baggage likely to carry the Hawley property into the enemy's camp, hang me if I'd ha' been at the trouble of conveying her and her rattle-traps last year across the channel!"

Though careful to conceal my chagrin, I was not just then capable of *very* artful dissembling. —My constitution had received a shock, from which even youth and its own strength could scarcely guarantee recovery. Already, within twelve months' space, nature had twice made an effort to rescue me from the jaws of death; and in the present and third case, the physician shook his head. Exposure to the bitter night air, after violent exertion, without hat or coat, had produced inflammation of the lungs, which was feared to have left the seeds of pulmonary consumption.

They did not of course tell me this; but I read in the gentleness of their mode of address-

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ing me, and their suggestions for my future government, that such was my doom.—When, in reply to the Archdeacon's jeremiad concerning the political and other changes in the society of the neighbourhood, I expressed my indifference, seeing that "now the family seat of the Wrottesleys was destroyed, I had no longer a tie to the soil, and that the estate would be shortly in the market,"—he entreated me "to take no rash measures,—to wait the issue of my illness,—life itself being short." And as there were tears in his eyes, caused either by apprehension of my danger, or regret that another great Yorkshire property should pass out of the line of its ancient inheritors, I began to agree with *him* that, if my days were numbered, the settlement of my affairs might just as well be left to Dora and Emily and their liege lords, as harass my remnant of existence.

Of Dr. Temple if I hesitate to speak, it is not from mean disinclination to render justice to a man I had dared to consider my enemy; but from scarcely knowing in what terms to describe the manly candour with which he met half-way the difficulties of our relative position.

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"I trust we are now friends for life, my dear Mr. Wrottesley," said he, with some emotion but no embarrassment, the first day I was well enough for desultory conversation. "Hitherto, we have misunderstood each other; and both, I fear, have accusations to lay to their conscience. But as so much your elder, I am the most to blame. At my age, there was no excuse for the false delicacy, or rather the unchristian-like pride, which forbad my urging my brother's claims upon you in terms which I am now convinced would have prevailed. To this mistrust of *you* and care of my own consequence, the life of one excellent creature and happiness of another, have been cruelly sacrificed; and in sackcloth and ashes do I repent having been silenced by a crisis in which the cobweb barriers of conventional form should have been broken through without scruple."

I replied by fervently clasping his hand.

"I know you better now," said he, in a tremulous voice. "You have taught me to know you better; and I rejoice that a friend has re-entered my dwelling, and a parishioner my flock."

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Scarcely less affecting was my interview with poor old Gripham,—hitherto so contemned by my boyish misapprehension. Recent events appeared to have added ten years to his age.—His hair was nearly white,—his eyes were hollow,—his voice broken. I verily believe, that the destruction of the old seat with which his fortunes had been connected from the day of his birth, weighed far more on his mind than on mine!—I had previously learned from the Archdeacon that the charge for auditing my accounts during my minority, which I had fancied so exorbitant, amounted only to the per centage usually exacted; and when I found that, during the conflagration, the poor man had issued orders for saving my effects instead of the documents which he believed to be essential to his reimbursement of sums constituting his whole fortune and that of his children,—for the first time during our intercourse I shook him cordially by the hand. I felt that my distrust had scarcely merited such devoted fidelity.

As soon as I was strong enough to take the air, he wanted me to accompany him to visit the ruins.—But I declined; on pretence that

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the sight would be painful; but in reality, from knowing that if I once ventured out in the carriage, I should have no further pretext for postponing a return of the visits of inquiry of Stormont and Lord John Jocelyn.—It was a pleasanter task to issue orders for rewards to be presented to the numerous parties who had rendered notable service at the fire;—to the poor, in money,—to the farmers, in pieces of plate.

The insurance offices, though eager to prove that the catastrophe originated in the wanton disorder of myself and my guests, who were proved to have paraded the bed-rooms in a state of mad intoxication with lights brandished in their hands,—were made accountable for a sum of 22,000*l*;—testimony being brought that the fire originated in the over-heated chimney of a chamber some distance beyond the iron door dividing the wing from the main body of the house, which, by a fortunate coincidence I had caused to be closed.

"This sum, Sir, will go half way towards constructing a new mansion!" said Gripham, when he brought me tidings that all opposition to my claim was withdrawn on the part of the Phœnix and Pelican.

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"Rather towards the liquidation of my debts, Gripham!" said I, in a desponding tone.—"To-morrow, I leave my kind friends in Yorkshire, —probably never to return."

The same excellent physician who had insisted on a change of climate the preceding spring, having informed me that, in the present instance, my sole chance of recovery lay in a southern atmosphere, I had made arrangements for starting for Nice.—But (will the reader believe in so sudden a modification of my love of independence, and dread of family interference?) I had of my own accord besought the company on my journey of my mother and Dora!—They were on the point of breaking up their establishment at Hentsfield. The former, like myself, was an invalid; the latter, like myself, a trifle out of conceit with the worldly and heartless system of our early life; and well disposed to quit the country where the marriage of her recusant knight, Reginald Stormont, was creating some sensation.—I felt that we were entitled to contribute to our mutual consolation.—*Stessa sangue,—stessa sorte!*—If fated to die before the flowers of

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my precocious spring gave place to a more fruitful germ, better that kindred hearts and the accents of my native language should cheer my parting hour.

It was on the threshold of Wrottesley Church, I took leave of Dr. Temple. I had walked there, with my travelling-carriage waiting at the door, for a last look at the stone which covered the remains of her to whose early death I had so cruelly contributed.

"I am not afraid to contemplate it *now*," said I, raising my eyes to the tablet, while my hand was pressed in that of the man who had consecrated her grave; "for I feel less unworthy to meet her where we shall shortly be united—less unworthy of the kindness you have lavished on me and mine."

Nor was it till many, many miles divided me from that sacred spot, I succeeded in subduing a burst of emotion that seemed to rend my heart asunder, as I went forth into exile,—broken in health, fortune, and reputation,—after witnessing the utter downfal of my successive Castles in the Air.—

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CHAPTER X.

Ne plus penser, ne plus aimer, ne plus haïr,
Si dans un coin du cœur il éclot un désir,
Lui couper sans pitié ses ailes de colombe,—
Etre comme est un mort, étendu sous la tombe,
Dans l'immobilité savourer lentement
Comme un philtre endormeur, l'anéantissement:
Voilà quel est mon vœu, tant j'ai de lassitude
D'avoir voulu gravir cette côte âpre et rude,
Brocken mystérieux, où des sommets nouveaux
Surgissent tout à coup sur de nouveaux plateaux,
Et qui ne laisse voir de ses plus hautes cimes,
Que l'esprit du vertige errant sur les abimes.

GAUTIER.

How gentle is the sward!—Tread soft!—Perhaps
A blue-eyed creature whom the spring forgot
To quicken, lies below. Perhaps she was
Too frail to unfold her bloom,—so died i' the bud.

PROCTOR.

BEAR witness for me, reader, that in my more prosperous days, I never attempted to

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enlist your sympathy in favour of the glories of Wrottesley Hall. I might have dazzled you by a catalogue of my pictures and statues, or captivated your fancy by a description of the fêtes given under the old roof when it was the domicile of the too famous Wharton. But I spared your patience; and have consequently the better right to take you by the hand, and lead you down the gently sloping lawn of my new home at Villa Verde; an overgrown hedge of rosemary and tamarisk alone interposing between my domain and the Mediterranean shore.

In this tranquil retreat, all was holiness and peace. I was fortunate in finding a residence where separate pavilions, (neither of them much larger than Hentsfield, though dignified by their Italian elevation) were united by what was called a park; consisting of a beautiful flower-garden and shrubbery *à l'Anglaise*, with some noble avenues of Spanish chestnuts and cork-trees whose growth afforded little indication of our vicinity to the sea.

As no one has occasion to address a letter to my southern retreat, no need set down its exact whereabout! Whether at Nice,

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Hyères, Cannes, or elsewhere, English carpers familiar with those localities, would be sure to attack my veracity :—each invalidating some trait of my partial portrait by declaring that neither chestnut, nor cork-tree, nor cactus nor palm, nor even greensward, ever flourished near the spot depicted.

Be content, therefore, dear reader,—or rather, like poor Dora, be *overjoyed* at finding the soft gales of an Eden-like atmosphere gradually restore vigour to my exhausted frame. Within a few months, I began to exist without the dread that every passing day might be my last: within twelve, to breathe nearly as freely as other people. Still, my health was sufficiently precarious to be an object of absorbing interest to my poor mother; who seemed to feel as if her prodigal son were restored to her by the reverses which, by bringing him to the brink of the grave, had brought him also to a sense of what was due to those who had kept watch over his cradle. Even with myself, the fluctuations of the breath of life and the changes of weather by which they were influenced, remained a leading care. Infirmities of body

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obtained complete ascendancy over my equally infirm mind!—

My new home was too shadily situated to require immigration during the summer heats which too often drive the northern native into Switzerland; and on the approach of winter, when the inhabitants of the neighbouring *bastides* repaired to the nearest city for the enjoyment of those carnival pleasures with which the mercurial blood of foreign countries is unable to dispense, our English nature saw nothing like self-denial in remaining in our beautiful solitude to welcome Emily, and her husband, and the little Wrottesley that now completed her happiness.

When the beautiful Princesse de Joinville, reared in a tropical climate, first witnessed the fall of the leaf in the neighbourhood of Paris, she is said to have melted into tears, in the idea that the end of all things was at hand! By a similar association of ideas, my mother and sisters, on passing a winter among verdure and flowers, seemed to fancy they had attained supreme bliss. Neither snow nor frost, nor even chill, was apparent at Villa Verde. The

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same beneficent gifts of the earth,—the same loveliness of creation, prevailed!

The superiority attained in the art of horticulture in England, Holland, and Flanders, has often been said to originate in defects of climate. To produce even a faint rivalship with the aspect of tropical climates, excessive art being indispensable. But this I know, that the exercise of similar art in a southern land is as delightful as to train a docile and well-conditioned child, after hammering the brains of a dunce; and when I discovered all that might be done with a little care, a little cost, and a great deal of interest in their exercise, towards surprising new secrets out of the unbounded treasury of nature, I addressed myself to the task of garden-making with as much enthusiasm as I had ever done to the construction of Castles in the Air. It was still my delight to—

> create, and in creating live
> A being more intense.

My family, long since convinced of the fruitlessness of opposing my wishes, witnessed with silent regret my purchase of a residence so far

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from my native country, as to induce a fear that I might verify my announcement, and return to Wrottesley no more. But I had only to allude to the necessity imposed upon me by an infirm constitution of seeking a *bel respiro* nearer the sun, to enlist my anxious mother on my side.

I was even proof against the raillery of my sisters on beholding me station myself for hours in a garden-chair, among mounds of newly-turned earth, in the plantations I was creating, to experimentalize in acclimatizing trees of Mexican and Caribbean growth, in the glowing soil of the South of France; assuring them that occupation prospered my health, and quoting the assertion of Bacon, which cannot be too freshly remembered by the votaries of country life: "God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks: and man shall ever see, that, when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately sooner than to garden

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finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

Hints were sometimes thrown out by the Howard Smiths, touching the folly of wasting large sums upon a foreign villa, of which, after a season I should lose sight and forget the very existence, while Wrottesley Hall remained in ruins. But I turned a deaf ear. After all, whose whims had I to consult, or who had claims upon me? An easy landlord to tenants whom I knew from Dr. Temple and the Archdeacon to be admirably cared for by Gripham, who, if he obtained a princely living out of my estates, did them ample justice in return.—I was far happier in creating a pinetum where the grandeur of the cedar or the pine-tree

In lordly pride predominant o'er all,

was hitherto unknown, than I should have been in raising a palace, for the purpose of contending in dinner-giving and election-manœuvres with persons instinctively averse to me, like Lord John Jocelyn and the happy man who now wrote himself Sir Reginald Stormont.

Hemmed in between their rampant great-

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ness, I should have been a constant prey in Yorkshire, to the heartburnings which, in that great human struggle we call society, perpetually beset poor human nature; by being made to sink under the oppression of their titles of honour, and swallow their allusions to Norman descent and aristocratic connection; while every time I found myself at variance with a farmer or elector, the words upstart or interloper would have been audibly muttered in my ears.

But in my peaceful garden by the sea-shore, as solitary and reflective as the Athenian Timon but free from his vindictive animosities, I was able to gaze contentedly through the loopholes of retreat, upon the antics of public life, without anxiety or annoyance. My trees took root and flourished,—my exotics exposed strange blossoms to the admiration of that fervid sky. Encouraged by my success, I freighted vessels to the ports of another hemisphere; which carried thither the oil of Provence and wine of Gascony, bringing me in exchange wonderful plants from the crevices of the Cordilleras, or the burning shores of La Plata.

By degrees, the return of these winged

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messengers created new interests in my mind. Ere they neared the port of *—(Marseilles, cries one reader,—Cannes, exclaims a second; but *I* say again the port of *—) I required them to signal the observatory at Villa Verde:—and then came the excitement of wondering whether the marvels of the vegetable world they had brought as tributes to my feet, were climbers to cover with glorious clusters the new kiosk I was building to overlook the sea; or trailing plants, to perfect the mass of rock work which concealed the entrance to an ice-house, which the same vessel that brought my spruce-plants, Kalmias and New Town pippin-trees from the United States, enabled me to fill, to the admiration of the country round:—or whether some Patagonian variety of Araucaria, a walking-stick for—

Andes, giant of the Western star,—

were about to germinate for the first time in European earth, and uplift its head, after a few years' Titanic growth, far above the neighbouring light-house.

Then came solicitudes about the treatment and entertainment of these interesting strangers;

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—whether they were of thirsty nature, or rigid ascetics;—whether fond of society, or peevish solitaries like myself. When one of my exotics was about to blossom for the first time, I have sat near it for hours to watch the buds expand; hoping to catch a heavenly fragrance differing from all the odours as yet familiar to the luxurious votary of the flower garden. I never remember to have seen Charles Roxborough betray so much interest in the first trial of one of his colts on whose merits thousands were depending, as I, when forced to climb a ladder to admire the first flowering of a still unnamed magnolia, which had required four years' coaxing into bloom.

"You will soon ride your hobby to death, my dear Wrottesley!" said Emily, when she embraced me at the close of her second annual visit, (about to return to the snug vicarage situated in what the populous midland counties of England call "a capital neighbourhood," where her amusements consisted in wondering every morning whether the weather would admit of her daily shopping expedition in her pony-chaise to the neighbouring town,—in

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ambitious, fussy, dinner parties, crowned with a Christmas ball at the Town Hall, and the "brief madness" of the annual races,—the sum total of which she and Howard Smith regarded as the sublime of social enjoyment:)—"you will soon ride your hobby to death. Why, oh! why condemn yourself to hard labour and solitary confinement within a span of a dozen acres, when so noble an estate awaits your improving hand at home!—Villa Verde is the prettiest spot I ever saw; but *toujours Villa Verde ne vaut rien.*"

Poor Emily,—or rather *happy* Emily!—for, absorbed in her husband and child and the petty interests to which the name of duty assigned importance, *she* had not been schooled by suffering and mortification into the mood which, like that of the melancholy Jaques, finds solace

> in trees,—books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in every thing.

To me, those contemned twelve acres, even before the ambition of opening a paradise in the wild and surrounding myself with the Mauritian

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vegetation described by Bernardin de St. Pierre, added another dozen to my territory, contained a little world. So far from exhausting my pleasures, as might be apprehended by superficial observers who, glancing across a flowery lawn and seeing it bathed in sunshine, fancy it must always present the same glaring and monotonous appearance,—every day brought vicissitude — every hour some interesting change. The grey day, the showery, the breezy, interposed between those glowing Midsummer fervours which loaded the tranquil evenings and the sea breezes that freshened them, with more than Oriental sweetness :— the morning twilight,—the serene moonlight,— the evenings when delicious airs came stirring the leaves of my shrubbery as if whispering to their favourite blossoms,—the white moths flitting over the parterres at nightfall like ghosts of departed flowers,—the fire-flies glittering at a later season almost within reach of the waves which the same electricity of atmosphere rendered phosphorescent,—the chirp of the cigala in the grass,—the melancholy gleam of the glow-worm on the moss like a star fallen

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from the sky and trembling in its unnatural sphere,—all these and a thousand shades and changes, visible only to the privileged eye of the lover of nature, afforded me a world of thoughts, —lying, I dare not use the thread-bare quotation of "too deep for tears"—but in that region of the soul unsusceptible of vibration from the commotion of worldly interests.

Ruminative as a Turk, if I still indulged my propensity for building Castles in the Air, it was in the form of a kiosk overshadowed by the intermingling branches of those star-crowned trees, which, like colossal rose-bushes, adorn the wilds of the Himalaya, the jungles of Java, or the banks of the Xuanquil; the herbage around me being brocaded with nameless flowers, like the gorgeous carpet of the Prairies or the valleys of Japan. In such an Eden, methought I could live happy:—an Eden without an Eve, and consequently without a serpent in the grass!—

My mother, too advanced in years to wander onward through the vale of shadows without a staff, soon discovered the impossibility of getting through her winters without an English

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chaplain at her elbow to administer to the health of her soul, and an English physician to administer to the health of her body; and regarding me as half a heathen for worshipping in the stillness of my chamber or under the more august canopy of the summer sky, and scarcely more orthodox in submitting to be prescribed for by a leech who "put his faith in Peter,"—repaired to Nice every winter to be chilled by the mountain *bise*, and the formalities of Great British tea-tables.

Every summer, however, she came back to me, to inquire with an indulgent smile after the fruiting of my mangoes and pawpaw trees; —the miraculous powers ascribed to which, by the way, of converting the toughest chickens into the tenderest if buried an hour or two among the roots, I was half inclined to test upon poor Dora, who was progressing more steadily into single blessedness than accorded with *her* taste or my own.

I was not, indeed, yet without hope, that among the valetudinarians who congress every winter at Nice, my sister might find some sentimental convalescent disposed to unite his

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fortunes with those of a helpmate as much addicted from taste as himself from infirmity, to panada and a family medicine-chest.—When lo! one quiet summer day, she startled me by announcing her betrothal to a retired Colonel of Cuirassiers, who possessed a *bastide* within a league or two of Villa Verde,—a *sabreur* who discussed his bottle of Burgundy for breakfast, and whose voice sounded as through a speaking trumpet, so that when whispering soft things to her in a corner, he might have been giving the word of command to his regiment.

I had nothing to say against the match. In addition to the crosses, stars, and scars which impress the government stamp of heroism, the Colonel possessed a solid fortune and character; and though three folio pages would scarcely contain the anathemas vented by the Reverend Smith Howard at her marriage with a Papist, a notion that struck her of Emily's disinclination to have another little Wrottesley make its appearance, to divide with her own the inheritance of its rich uncle, so stimulated her feelings, that the following Sunday the banns were published.

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Having long subscribed to the philosophy of letting people be happy after their own fashion, I should have been well content to give her away,—particularly as Colonel de Villemont was obliging enough to discuss his cigars in my forcing-houses whenever there was occasion for smoking out insects. But unluckily, Dora's attendance had become essential to my poor mother, whom she had kept in leading-strings ever since she had left off her own; so that the good old lady, when left unguarded, was easily beguiled by the first specious toady she fell in with the following winter at Nice, into those pitiable excesses of Tractarianism and patent medicines, to which the middle-aged English gentlewoman is apt to fall a victim. A horrible orgie of blue pill, purporting to relieve indigestion produced by doctrinal anxieties, cut short the remnant of her days; and while I sincerely lamented her loss and missed her indulgent and affectionate companionship, it afforded me no small comfort that, for six or eight years past, I had been expiating my early gracelessness by the most deferential attention to her comfort.

In her turn, my poor mother had sincerely recanted her former errors. She admitted

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having been too chicken-pecked a mother of daughters, to be a just mother to her son; and if it had been decreed her to reap a whirlwind from the wind of her sowing, thanks be to Heaven, he had made atonement for his fault.

I never felt more gratified than by a conversation in which I heard her take part with the Archdeacon, whom I tempted over one autumn to visit me, by the promise of ortolans, beccafichi, and shell fish

Wearing strange shapes, and bearing many names,

unknown to his gastronomic erudition,—to say nothing of corn, wine, and oil, whose ripeness our pallid sun knows only by importation.

When, in reply to her inquiry after the jolly-faced old Yorkshire Baronet, his namesake, whom she had seen in his company at Wrottesley Hall, he mournfully shook his head, I endeavoured to cut short the subject by reminding her how often of late she had noticed the name of Sir Charles Roxborough, as a guest at the fashionable entertainments of London; more especially those of the newly-formed Court of William IV.

"And yet," said I, "one would scarcely

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have expected to find the Seïd of Oatlands naturalized among the Liberals now in the ascendant!"

"Show me the place in which you would *not* find the fellow," retorted the Archdeacon, "where pence or preferment are to be picked up! I never see those *chiffonnier* rascals in Paris raking the kennel or heaps of rubbish, for the chance of some stray coin or trinket, without likening their dirty occupation to my cousin Charley's. Not but he holds his head high enough, while his hands are groping in the mud. The first to desert the standard he had so long followed, and denounce the frivolous egotism of the late King as having brought the country to the verge of a revolution, Charles Roxborough carried with him into the new camp the empty self-consequence he had acquired in the old. The world, so easily subjected by impudent impostors, took him once more upon trust; and he now passes current as the most gentlemanly of radicals,—a man who, knowing by experience the abuses of society, is the safest of reformers,—just as your ablest police-officer is a reclaimed thief."

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"But how do his political pretensions," said I, "square with his engagements on the turf?"

"Oh! Charles is cunning enough to make the cogs of one calling play into the wheels of t'other!" retorted the Archdeacon. "The Legs are made to believe that no man holding so respectable a position in life, would condescend to the shufflings and subterfuges of which he stands accused; while to his constituents, he represents his companionship with grooms and trainers, as a noble devotion to the national sports of his beloved country!"

"Poor constituents!" said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"Ay, and poor Legs!" retorted the Archdeacon. "The proverbial feat of skinning a flint has been far outdone by Charles Roxborough's, in jockeying the jockeys and taking in the knowing ones. Between him and his confidential biscuit-baker, shabbinesses are constantly perpetrated in the betting-ring, which, attempted in a servants' hall, would bring a footman under the pump."

My poor mother, a woman of peaceful nature, endeavoured to moderate his vehemence.

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"You would scarcely plead his cause so warmly, my dear lady," cried he, "did you know by what deep-laid scheming he endeavoured to defraud your son out of his fortune,—his principles,—his reputation,—his standing in the world. The hand of Providence has been hard upon you in some respects, Wrottesley," continued he, more gravely. "But if the burning down of the old Hall, and your consequent loss of health, have been the means of wrenching you out of the company of Sir Charles Roxborough, the chastening of Heaven was the greatest mercy ever vouchsafed you!"—

"Certainly the greatest mercy that could have been afforded to *me!*" said my mother, with deep feeling. "The latter years of my life have been rendered its happiest portion, by the comfort I have enjoyed in my son."

"And in Villa Verde—quiet, happy Villa Verde!"—added I, unwilling to hear myself overpraised.

"Perhaps I might not have been quite so sure of you at Wrottesley Hall," rejoined she with an involuntary smile at my partiality for the creation of my hands. "I did not however

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expect, Mr. Archdeacon, to find *you*,—a Yorkshireman by birth and benefice,—encouraging my son in his expatriation."

"Nor do I, my dear Ma'am, nor do I!"—cried he, eager to rebut such a charge.—"On the contrary, I should like to see him with a good English house over his head, and a good English wife to share it with him: taking part in all the good which his old friends and contemporaries, Lord John and Sir Reginald Stormont, are working for the country. You wouldn't know the neighbourhood, Harry!—roads like gravel walks,—school-houses in every village,—garden premiums in every hamlet.—The people about the Elms, twice as decent as they were in poor Sir Gratian's time, are consequently twice as prosperous."

At these encomiums on my enemies, my heart hardened almost as suddenly as in its more generate years.

"And what's more," continued the Archdeacon, "if next session sees the Reform Bill carried through, as in all reason it must, and the borough is disfranchised, a door will be

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opened to new influences such as will perfect the good work sketched out."

At this suggestion, my heart expanded again, Parliamentary reform was the only worldly vision that still haunted my peaceful shrubberies.

"One of Lord Meadowley's brothers, with a thousand or two of pounds in his hand, would be sure to come in; and who knows but some day or other, we may compass a railroad like our betters!" continued the old gentleman who often made my poor mother's blood run cold by his description of his recent journeys between Liverpool and Manchester.

"But surely," said she, again breaking into the conversation "though Mr. Whichcote may be lukewarm in behalf of his constituents, Sir Charles Roxborough must be disposed to protect in parliament the interests of a neighbourhood where he possesses so large a stake?"

"Not an acre, Ma'am, not an acre!"—retorted the Archdeacon. "What we believed to be a lease to Lord John Jocelyn, was in fact

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a sale of the Elms to the Duke of Sheffield. At Sir Gratian's death, not a perch of land in Yorkshire could he call his own!"

"A sad mortification!" said I,—"for he was a hospitable old soul, and a country gentleman at heart. But for the premature loss of his wife what a different man would he have been, and of how different a family, the father!"

"Ay, we might all have been different, if forced by folks wiser and better than ourselves, into the right path!"—was my old friend's rejoinder. "Give me the man who walks uprightly for conscience sake!—However, poor Gratian paid a heavy penalty for suffering himself to be overcrowed at first by a saucy Etonian, and latterly by a worthless *roué*, whom people would call a swindler were his coat out at elbows like his fortune. My cousin Gratian died my pensioner, Sir.—I took him out of the Rules of the Bench, and brought him home to my poor chimney-corner; where his pinched face and childish repinings gave me many and many a heart-ache.—But his pride was steel to the last.—He would have starved rather than let Lady Fortrose know how it was

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with him. He knew that Adela has a hard life of it with her deer-stalking, grouse-shooting, salmon-fishing gamekeeper of a lord, whose every second word is an oath, and every second draught a glass of whisky;—a selfish brute, who visits upon *her* the slippery tricks played him by her brother."

"And poor Adela, I suppose, is spirit-broken!"

"Worse!—Ill-usage has harassed her into a scold.—Patience is so thoroughly thrown away upon Fortrose, that she seems to fancy herself a privileged Xantippe."

"Caroline was always the sweeter tempered of the two," said I; "Caroline was gentleness herself!—Had her heart ever weaned itself, my dear Archdeacon, from her early attachment, so as to realize the projects of her brother, *she* would not have had to complain of a brutal husband."

"In *you?*"—cried my indignant mother. "I should think not!—The person who complained of *your* temper, Harry, must be, indeed, hard to please!—As I was saying the other day to Colonel de Villemont, I never remember to

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have heard you raise your voice in speaking to a woman. Your sister and he were predicting that you would live and die a bachelor: and I told them, as I tell every body, that if you were likely to make half so good a husband as you make a son, not a woman in France or England but might pray to God on her knees to become your wife."

An approving nod from the Archdeacon showed me he appreciated the compliment.—Six months afterwards, he was quietly re-established in Yorkshire; and my good old mother in her grave!—

I missed her more than any one will believe who has watched my devious course and deplored my shallow nature. But of all the ties which knit together the frame of society, the holiest and closest is that between parent and child. A perpetual fount of love abides in the fond depths of a mother's heart, supplying indulgence for all our frailties, balm for all our griefs, patience for all our tediousness;—and though my poor mother was far from an oracle, the loss of her kindly smile, her gentle word of affirmation or nod of encouragement, her

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untiring ear, her unswerving sense of rectitude, created a gap by my fireside such as the whole great world of London and Paris, could never have filled up.

Nay, strange to say, her departure created a chasm betwixt me and my sisters. Now she was no longer there to interpret their actions, and extenuate the little faults of taste of which they and their husbands were guilty, I often grew sadly out of sorts with Colonel de Villemont's brazen lungs and slaps on my back; while the homilies of poor Howard Smith, the very type of moral insignificance, wore me out as "*une obsession fatigante, un ennui plutôt qu'un chagrin, qui m'agaçait les nerfs.*" —Or, why not speak out plainly,—I was beginning to cherish against my two young nephews,—the demure little Wrottesley who seemed born for a silk-apron, and the uproarious little Wrottesley who was always making inroads on my powder-flask,—the sort of jealous antipathy which a man cherishes against his heir-presumptive.

"It seems fated," thought I, one balmy evening under the shade of my mimosas, after

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Wrottesley II. had been convicted of carrying off the finest stalk of my papyrus for a lance,—Wrottesley I. having been previously accused of conveying to the offices as Jerusalem artichokes, a box of the rarest amaryllis roots, just arrived from New Zealand:—"it seems fated that the unlucky Wrottesley property shall never descend from sire to son! I almost regret that I did not fulfil my intention at quitting England, and dispose of every dirty acre of the estate. But the dissuasions of Dr. Temple and the Archdeacon, prevailed over my then enfeebled health; and ever since, my natural indolence, and the ease and liberality with which my affairs are managed for me by Gripham, have reconciled me to let matters remain as they are. Should the Reform Bill pass, however, I really think I might be tempted over to admire the crest-fallen looks of the Duke of Sheffield, Sir Charles Roxborough, and the rest of the borough-mongers. But after all, the journey would be a bore; and during my absence—(even if the Jardin Botanique, at Marseilles spared me one of its gardeners)—every thing at Villa Verde would go to rack and ruin."

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After all, why wander beyond the gates of my Eden?—What was there my house did not afford me?—

> Friends,—books,—the ripple of the summer sea,
> And nature in her cultivated trim
> Dress'd to my taste, inviting me abroad.

I could scarcely go further than Villa Verde without faring worse.—

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CHAPTER XI.

Qu'ai-je fait?—qu'ai-je appris?—Le temps est si rapide!—
L'enfant marche joyeux sans songer au chemin:
Il le croit infini, n'en voyant pas la fin.
Tout à coup, il rencontre une source limpide,
Il s'arrête,—il se penche,—il y voit un vieillard!—

DE MUSSET.

In ancient times the greatest enterprizes were sometimes decided by the flight of a bird. In my own case, what the lectures and prayers of my family had failed to accomplish, was effected by the blooming of a flower!—My Cuirassier brother-in-law, recalled into active life two years after his marriage by the events of the revolution of July by a district appointment comporting with his distinctions in the Imperial Army, was unexpectedly nominated to the Staff of the Duke of Orleans: and no sooner

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were my sister and the new General settled in Paris, than urgent letters from Dora entreated me to renounce a seclusion where neither mother nor sister remained to watch over my health and spirits.

But I was now too strong on the wing to listen to her croaking. My health and spirits were as firm as those of Hercules—or a beef-eater: *so* firm that, for the last two years, I had consoled myself during the winter months by the pleasures of the chase, for the suspension of my garden labours. My affection for my books and boar-hounds failed, however, to convince her that the new library and kennel added to my establishment at Villa Verde, could suffice for happiness. Madame de Villemont insisted that I could not enjoy my hunting without her husband's companionship, or my books without her own; and after describing with the spirit peculiar to a woman's pen, as though the pretty creatures dipped their crow-quills into effervescent ink, the promising aspect of the court of the Citizen King now that, every feather of the old Phœnix of monarchy being moulted, the new bird in its glorious array

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of plumage was beginning to clap its wings for an ascent into the sky far nearer the sun than its predecessors had ever accomplished, she summed up the novelties worthy to attract me to Paris, by a description of the new conservatory in the Jardin des Plantes and a catalogue of its contents, which caused me to have my passport *visé* and post-horses put to my carriage.

"*De trop, ou de trop peu, partout dans ce monde!*" said I, as I exhibited the said passport on reaching the *Barrière de l'Enfer*.—"This city, which is supposed to contain the brightest elements of human enjoyment it has been my fortune to enter, first, with a beardless chin which placed me below the level of its initiated; and now, with white hairs in my beard, which form a still more insuperable barrier. The orgie and the theatre have become gross and tawdry diversions to eyes accustomed to the deep tranquillity of the woods and Mediterranean waters; whose fair foam, lining the coast with swans-down, so well attests the fabled birth of Beauty's Queen. Too long a boy,—too late a philosopher,—I have simply missed my tide."

My brother-in-law, who was both fond and

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proud of me, and as desirous of attaching me to the soil of France as the Howard Smiths to incite me into laying the foundations of a new Wrottesley Hall, turned a deaf ear to my despondings. Seizing me by the arm as gruffly as a Newfoundland dog takes in its mouth one of its puppies, he walked me off from one end of Paris to the other;—showed me new institutions,—improvements in progress,—and described others still more important in contemplation,—all tending to the melioration of the city, and health and comfort of its citizens. "Don't tell me, my good brother," cried he, in one of his stentorian whispers, "that you have seen Naples, and may therefore die! The Paris of to-day is not the Paris with which you were acquainted. The mincing, painted minx you remember of old, is expiating her vices at the galleys; while the regenerated city has called into existence a class which is beginning to establish the social community of France on a new basis. Progress is the order of the day, my dear Wrottesley; a phase of civilization which has lost nothing in candour and integrity by the acquirement

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of polish on the surface, and enlightenment within."

I listened,—observed,—applauded; but though cheered by the amended prospects of a great nation, became more puzzled and depressed than ever by my own. The circle of General and Madame de Villemont, composed of the renovated wreck of the celebrities of the Empire, mingled with its regrets over the extinction of the great man's dynasty, such earnest hopes that the Napoleon of peace would establish *his* race more permanently on the throne by the early marriage of his sons and the creation of a numerous succession, that, like them, I began to fancy the best privilege of a man's existence forfeited who bequeaths his havings in this world to

> an unlineal hand,
> No son of his succeeding!

Little did the friends and kinsfolk of young Wrottesley de Villemont conjecture that, while enlarging on the urgency of finding brides for the Ducs d'Orléans and de Nemours, they were convincing *me* that even kings and heroes

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whose heirs are heirs presumptive, lose half their consequence; and that Pierre or Paul is no better than a tenant for life, who cannot on his death-bed remit the keys of his treasury to a hand of his flesh and blood!

I consoled myself for my cloudy perspective by assiduous visits to the high priests of Parisian floriculture: to the Jardin des Plantes,—to Hardy at the Palace of the Luxembourg,—to Noisette, Tripet, and Laffay; convincing myself by the words of their lips, that Paris and its suburbs afforded nothing to compare with Villa Verde.

A pilgrimage to the old Rue des Tournelles, which had exercised so strange an influence over my destinies, tempted one day my vagrant steps. I was aware that Madame de Valmoré to whom, after the accession of fortune of his niece, Monsieur Des Auliers had thought it right to bequeath the greater part of his property, had accompanied to England after the three Glorious Days, her husband, who occupied a post in the household of Monsieur. But I did not expect to find the place I had left invested with so dignified an air of

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respectability, thoroughly desecrated. The ground-floor of the fine old mansion, let to a *limonadier*, was converted into a showy café blazing with gilding, vermillion, and floods of gas, under the name of Les Jardins d'Armide:—an orchestra comprising half-a-dozen fiddles, three cornets-à-piston, a brace of pistols, and a leathern strap, being established under the injured branches of the old *vernis du Japon*. On the second floor, if the announcements accompanying the various door-bells were to be trusted, lived a manufacturer of *carton pierre*; on the third, a *professeur de gymnastique*; on the fourth, a *fabricant de dents osanores*, whose pendant sign, a colossal fore-fanged tooth, was made manifest at night by a blue lantern. On the fifth and sixth, lived a cleaner of kid gloves, and a maker of caoutchouc braces and impermeable clogs; which heterogeneous mass of new fangled rubbish, was the small change for a *conseiller de la cour des comptes* retired from office, living the life of a philosopher and exercising the virtues of a Christian.

Poor old Des Auliers!—What would he have

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felt could he have witnessed the profanation of the house of his fathers! Attributing at times my horticultural mania to my discovery at Les Epines of the interest assigned by the cultivation of flowers to the leisure of an idle man, I had often wished, at Villa Verde, I could bring the gentlemanly old man to visit my parterres and green-houses, containing plants as fabulous to *his* imagination as the gem-bearing trees and the magic gardens of Aladdin. But I was now content to let him sleep in peace in his marble alcove in the cemetery of Père La Chaise! *He* would not have entered, like my go-ahead brother-in-law, into the sweeping reforms of the times; *he* would have experienced little pleasure in administering the Code of the Empire under the hybrid constitutional Monarchy engendered by a *mariage de convenance* between England and France. But above all, he would have received a second death-blow from the meretricious transformation of walls within which his father and his father's father saw the light!—

In the spleen of my soul, I could not help hoping Yorkshire might have belied its renown for hospitality on occasion of the visit, or rather

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visitation, made by Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Valmoré to Sir Reginald and Lady Stormont at the Chase; more particularly when, on inquiring after the present state of Les Epines, I found that the villa was converted into a glue manufactory; that the plantations were cut down, and the grounds to be let on building leases.

Not a trace could I discover, in short, of my former sojourn in that city and among those of whom it is written by one of the liveliest of their modern writers, that "Il n'y a point de climat où l'on s'ennuie si vite d'aimer ou de haïr; où l'on soit plus prompt à s'enthousiasmer, ni plus prompt à s'en repentir; où la baisse soit si près de la hausse,—la banqueroute de la fortune; où, quand on est sublime, on est si près d'être ridicule; où les fêtes et les réputations ont un si brutal lendemain; où la mode dévore d'un égal appetit fidélités, grandeurs, et religions."

I inquired after my friends and companions of other days:—their place knew them no longer. After losing her beauty by the small-pox, Princesse Sabine de L. had retired from

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the world and become a *Sœur de Charité;* while Mélanie de Bonval—(when deserted for a better *parti* by D'Estomont, for whose sake she had somewhat outraged the severe etiquettes of the Faubourg St. Germain)—had thrown herself away on a Polish Count by whom her fortune was squandered at *roulette;* and was now a distressed miniature painter, with a *ski* tacked to her name, living in a fifth story in the Rue Taranne! Nestor Platicheff was *Chargé d'affaires* at Washington;—Anton Zriny, *Tavernicus* of Hungary;—Count Engelbert and his wife attached to the household of the Archduchess Sophia.—

Not a soul of my former associates but, having selected his road, had pursued it steadily for some specific purpose. I alone was a weed in the great wilderness of life,—I alone a cobweb, waving on a crumbling wall. The fearful epidemic which, two years before, had fastened like a vampire-bat on Paris, sucking the best blood out of its veins, had not left among its long array of tombs a frame more extinct as regards the pursuits and usefulnesses of life, than the enervate egotist who, from his luxurious

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entresol in the Hotel Bristol, surveyed the statue of Napoleon recently inaugurated on its column, and was forced to admit himself so many leagues in arrear of his century.

I was beginning to sicken of the stir and bustle of Paris; not a little augmented in my case by the favour which Dora, as the wife of a *brave de l'Empire* and an English lady of good extraction, commanded at the new Court,—when a letter from Gripham roused me from my lethargy. For so many months past he had been hinting that on the triumph of the Reform Bill, the Hawley interest in the borough of * * * would give place to the popularity of my name and principles that, by one of my customary self-delusions, I had reckoned, though resident abroad, upon being courted to return to England and undertake the representation. What, therefore, was my amazement to find from his present communication that he had been quietly cherishing the Wrottesley interest for a purpose of his own!—My quondam attorney had literally the audacity to inquire whether it would be objectionable to me for his eldest son to stand on my family interest!—*His* eldest son,—GRIPHAM'S!

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This was almost as humiliating an instance of the triumphs of time as the pollution of the sage old lawyer's sober garden by tobacco-smoke, punch, and the *surveillance* of the police! I remembered at my occasional visits to the pouncery of Messrs. Gripham, Klose and Sneak, a gaunt female in a short-waisted scanty gown, with yellow bows in her cap, who used to drop a curtsey, "hope she saw me well," and retire; —to whom my man of business occasionally alluded by the name of "Mrs. G." But that the eldest hope of whom she spake as head boy at the Wakefield Grammar School, should ever take it into his besotted head to sit in Parliament among the leading men of the county, was more than I had ever anticipated!

But the letter had other surprises in store. A railroad was projected between Manchester and Leeds, which would run through the heart of the Wrottesley estate,—nay, which would utterly obliterate the sacred solitude of Wheledale; and Gripham asked permission to forward me a copy of plans and estimates, to guide my decision concerning the terms offered me; hazarding an inquiry "whether any thing would induce me to come over for a week or two now

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I was so near England as Paris, in order to determine these matters for myself?"

"Grove the engineer, one of the first men of the day, to whom the construction of the line is conceded," added Gripham, "was at my office the other day, and spoke of you, my dear Sir, as an old acquaintance, whose interests might be safely entrusted to his hands."

"Grove the engineer!"—The name carried an air of renown with it. Had Gripham said "*Mr.* Grove," I should have pictured poor Andrew to myself still toiling up the hill of life. But "Grove the engineer" denoted a house and offices in Whitehall Place or Saville Row; perhaps a villa at Roehampton; certainly a wife and family. He had left the surly leather-dresser at the foot of the tree and attained the summit; and Wilsbury (unless Wilsbury itself were now a Roman Catholic college, or an orthopedic institution,) was probably as proud of him as though "Reverend" as well as Andrew were prefixed to the name of "*Grove.*"

On emerging from the reverie into which I was thrown by the perusal of this letter, by a sudden effort of resolution I donned my seven-

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leagued boots, and was in London within three days before a letter from the Villemonts could give notice to Emily and her husband to meet me at Dover, and by officious kindness mar all the pleasantness of my journey.

In the bewilderment of reaching the colossal ant-hill, I could have almost wished for old Charing Cross and old Pall Mall to guide my way to St. James's Street; the chaos of clubs, to make way for which palaces had sunk into the earth, making me shrink into myself like the smallest of pismires. But I was still more startled by its vicissitudes of human transformation; such as finding Hampden converted into a perpetual President in Exeter Hall, a Bishop in all but lawn sleeves,—a setter-to-rights of other people's consciences, and establisher of the faith of nations!—As to Sir Charles Roxborough, M.P., I will not arraign the wisdom of Government by stating in what arduous capacity I found him influencing the legislation of the kingdom. Suffice it that the press has thought proper to enshrine him among our first-rate men; leaving it for the malicious to surmise by what arts and artifices,

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—what dinners and breakfasts,—he can have contrived to throw dust in the eyes of the press.

Careful to avoid a dangerous approximation to the tail of the comet, I enjoyed a dinner or two among my old friends; heard attributed, without a smile to Sir Reginald Stormont, the foundation of half a dozen learned and scientific associations; and without a sigh to his wife a close approximation to the despotic throne of Fashion. Sir Harbottle Whichcote, (made a Baronet by Peel) was not more completely the right hand man of the Duke of Sheffield,—investing in specious phrase in the Lower House the bigotries His Grace felt entitled to inflict without modification on the patience of his peers,—than Albertine the parasitical honeysuckle entwining its fragrant blossoms round the unsightly and gnarled trunk of the Duchess, his wife.

Poor souls!—How indulgently I smiled upon them from a distance, as I bestrode my hobby on my way to Loddige's or Knight's;—no less than themselves, perhaps, the slave of vanity, in recapitulating to astonished nurserymen the growth of my Mexican and New Zealand

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gardens,—slips or seeds from which would have made the fortune of any member of their confraternity.

I saw Fortrose, with a red nose and protuberant presence mounted upon the coach-box of a drag in which reclined a faded, middle-aged woman, with three or four children stuffed into the carriage;—in one of whom, as she leaned from the window with a cloud of auburn curls overhanging her eyes, methought I could trace the heavenly countenance of our dear lost Caroline.—I even thought of riding up and renewing our acquaintance, when the ill-conditioned looking Earl drew up his team in every body's way under the elms near the Serpentine. But the torrent of oaths that burst from his lips when his clumsiness entangled him with the cab of some youngster of the Guards, disgusted me so completely, that I had not courage for the attempt.

I had loitered away so many months in Paris that the spring was already far advanced; my scarlet rhododendrons and blue ranunculuses being probably in their glory in the deserted gardens of Villa Verde, while I was swallowing

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the dust and smoke of London, stunned by the rumble of its drays, and blinded by the flash and glare of its glittering impositions. After gratifying my curiosity by listening to the humming and ha-ing in the House of one or two of my old college friends, whom the smoothness of parliamentary reports had at a distance deluded me into fancying must have been transformed by magic power into orators, —and in a stroll along Pall Mall to the milk-and-water prose of one or two others, whom well got-up pamphlets deceived me into supposing must have progressed into men of genius,— I found myself so much more solitary in roaring, raving, coaxing, intriguing London, than in my quiet greenery by the lone sea waves, that, after choaking through my disgusts for a day or two, in hopes that "Grove the engineer" would return from a tour he was making among his great works in progress,—I decided to bear it no longer, and took my way towards the North.

Towards my home!—my home which, now that I was approaching it anew, I felt I had somewhat too precipitately abandoned and somewhat too long neglected.—It was natural

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that my disappointments should have planted a thorn in my side. But I had no business to cultivate it till it took permanent root in my nature. I had no right to abandon to the care of others the extensive interests which Providence had submitted to my hand.

And how beautiful Old England seemed to me, in my progress to the North!—not as now, a helter-skelter flight by railroad, rendering the landscape a blurred and featureless confusion; but an easy post journey, through fertile leas, where the hay was half up,—half down,—filling the air with fragrance, and the fields with a thriving population; while the chesnut trees in full bloom drooped their sturdy branches to meet the feathery surface of the seeded grass.

Instead of the dun vegetation of the olive gardens surrounding Villa Verde,—instead of the rigid foliage of the aloe, or twisted stem of the pomegranate,—behold the glorious oaks and beeches, and rich underwood of maple, ash, and hazel, characteristic of my native land! At a distance, the strips of hawthorn hedges sheeted with bloom, gave the fields the appear-

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ance of bleaching grounds. The lilac bushes of the gardens, the old apple trees of the orchards, all that could put forth a flower, from the germander of the brookside to the heather of the highest fell, seemed to have donned its holiday array in honour of my return.

Twelve years of absence had assigned to these things the charm of novelty; for as the proverb hath it, "Nothing new under the sun, but that which has been forgotten." As strange of aspect to the eyes of others as the green fields and fair complexions of England appeared to my own, I warned my servant to discretion, and profited by the incognito afforded by my sunburnt face and exuberant beard, to dine quietly at Wakefield; and I should perhaps have found less fault with a tough fowl and fiery bottle of sherry, had not the inn—I beg its pardon,—the hotel—borne the name of the "Jocelyn Arms," with the bearings of the Duke of Sheffield emblazoned on the sign, with the vermillion and ultramarine gorgeousness of a missal.

But when, after dinner, I strolled through the town, my attention was disagreeably arrested

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by certain splendid edifices which had arisen during my banishment. Two of them, all stucco and astragal without, and brass and gaslight within, were, of course, gin-palaces; the third was a Doric temple, bearing in gold letters on its entablature, the inscription, COUNTY BANK, and on the lintel of the door a less ostensible label of "Messieurs Sneak, Klose, and Rumblebottom;" while the fourth, on the outskirts of the town, was a spacious mansion, half house of business, half villa, the rich furniture of which was apparent through the plate glass windows; beside the double oaken doors of which appeared on one side the name of "MR. GRIPHAM," and on the other, **office bell of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak & Klose.**

As the two latter gentlemen had long established their domicile in the neighbouring churchyard, I knew to whom exclusively to attribute the splendours before me, from the dining-room window curtains of crimson damask, to the conservatory that overtopped the garden wall; and could not help regarding the riches of my auditor with the same jealous interest with which Adam may have contemplated the

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beautiful being abstracted out of his flesh and blood.—

But if I looked in vain for the shabby old offices of my man of business, I was still more surprised by the changes effected in the suburb through which I quitted the town; which, even had I forgotten the circumstance, would have been pointed out to me as my property by the names inscribed in prominent letters on the street corners. There was Wrottesley Crescent, —Wrottesley Place,—Powerscourt Street, and Powerscourt Buildings; Powerscourt House, (a linen-draper's,) and Wrottesley House, (a boarding-school;) while at the commencement of a turnpike road, trim, neat, and varnished like a Dutch toy, stood a toll-gate it was a pleasure to look at, and a toll-house with a model garden, which (saving for the dust) it might have been a pleasure to live in. For three miles to come, every here and there stood rows of neat houses, adjoining a mass of brick with a tall chimney, announcing a factory far less inviting than the toll-house.

At length, these minor tenements disappeared from the landscape; and nothing remained

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but well-remembered farms half hidden among clustering trees. Still further, nothing but pastures, with here and there among the hedge-rows a few of those grand old timber trees which characterize the English gentleman's estate. "And lo! my foot was upon my own domain, and my name was Wrottesley!"

Resolved, however, to keep the said name to myself, I ordered my postboys and servants to proceed slowly with the carriage to the village, and wait for me at the little inn which had borne for more than a century the name of the Wrottesley Arms, (though the sign attached to it had evidently been painted with the effigy of a White Swan); and whistling as I went, to keep up my courage, walked slowly towards the lodge gates of Wrottesley Hall!—

But that I had long outgrown the novel-reading tendencies of my early years, the romance of my position would probably have sufficed to raise my spirits to its level!—

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CHAPTER XII.

Seek we thy once lov'd home?
The hands are gone that cropt its flowers,
Cold is the hearth within its bowers,—
And should we thither roam,
Its echoes and its empty tread
Would sound like voices from the dead.

CAMPBELL.

LEST the reader should suspect me of a paltry desire to ape the weaknesses as well as misanthropy of Byron, I have forborne to confess that in my retirement, or rather during my association with persons extracting full enjoyment of the pleasures of life out of an income twenty times inferior to my own, I had become somewhat of a skin-flint.—"Useless expenditure," was a favourite word with me in all things not immediately relating to my beloved garden.

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But though I plead guilty to having systematically instructed Gripham to throw away no money at Wrottesley for ornamental purposes so long as the estate needed improvement, I really think he might have spared a little paint to the richly-scrolled old iron gates, which I found looking as rusty as the locks of Judas;—and though the lodges were now necessarily inhabited by persons to whom the park was let off as grazing ground, he should have remonstrated against their being converted into laundries. On the placard announcing "No thoroughfare," I fully expected to find inscribed "Washing done here."

In accordance with the said announcement, admittance to the park was surlily refused. But a small bribe, and the explanation that I wanted to cut across the bridge into Wheledale, caused the side-gate to creak on its hinges;—and there I was, in the heart of my territory,—amid the long grass of which, a thousand grasshoppers and crickets were chirping and in its richly crested groves, a thousand birds singing gaily,—as if to greet my return. What a noble sweep of ground,—how open to the summer breezes and sunshine of heaven,—yet, how

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sheltered from the bleak north, by woods which, to my now contracted sense of proprietorship, seemed all but boundless!—

On reaching the knoll from which the house used to become visible, I stopped short with an almost sickening sensation,—expecting to see the blackened ruins still disfiguring the landscape. But from the spot on which I stood, nothing was apparent but the *façade* of the East wing; which, though materially injured by the fire, and ever since condemned, shut up, and uninhabited, still presented at a distance an imposing appearance; the heaps of stone and rubbish, which were all that remained of the razed walls of the main building, being nearly concealed by a luxuriant growth of elder bushes, brambles, and briony,—the humble vegetation certain to flourish among ruins.

One of the objects which struck me most from the high road near Wakefield, was the completely-filled churchyard of a Wesleyan chapel, the very foundations of which were not laid on my departure from England. And this overgrowing of the hearth of my old home, this prodigal rendering back from the earth in

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return for what was consigned to her bosom, filled me with painful reflections. It was many years since I had felt so insignificant, as while contemplating the mournful monument of the blessings I had turned to such poor account.

I literally could not master my emotions sufficiently to approach the spot where my mind's eye felt prepared to see poor old Sir Gratian in his leather gaiters stand whistling to his pointers, as he used when he came to fetch me for an attack on the preserves.—I wanted some one at that moment whose hand would extend itself to clasp my own.—I wanted a friendly shoulder on which to conceal my face, and the struggle of irrepressible emotion. After obtaining some degree of mastery over myself, I took a short cut across the park to the village, by a pathway nearly overgrown, and rang at the Vicarage bell. Many months had elapsed since my last communication with Temple; and unaware of my arrival in England, he was scarcely likely to recognise in a man of mahogany-coloured complexion and grizzled whiskers, the fair-faced fool whom he had seen fling away his prospects of happiness.

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"Dr. Temple, Sir, is at Cambridge. The young ladies are walking in the garden," said a grave-looking servant, in answer to my inquiries.

"Be so good as to ask them when the Doctor is expected home," said I.

And the "young ladies" proved to be so near the garden-gate that, struck by the silvery accents of the voice which replied, "Papa will be at home to-morrow. Perhaps the gentleman will leave his name," I renounced my previous purpose, and thought it better to secure a welcome at once by simply announcing myself as "Mr. Wrottesley."

"I thought so, Sir! I beg your honour's pardon, but I thought I remembered the face the moment you spoke to me!" cried the man, who proved to have been a former groom of my own.

And in a moment, Dr. Temple's eldest daughter was apprized, and "Mr. Wrottesley" ushered into the drawing-room; and if ever a tea-table was presided over with the modesty, cheerfulness, and grace which form the best characteristic of an unaffected Englishwoman,

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it was by the beautiful girl whom I had left a lovely child; and who, from early officiation as a mother to her brother and sisters, and as mistress to her father's household, had acquired a gentle self-possession such as more than supplied the place of knowledge of the world.

I perceive my readers smile. But I shall be greatly obliged to them to keep their smiles to themselves; or how shall I venture to describe the pleasure I found in retracing with Mary Temple the leading events which marked my term of banishment, and occasioned my return?

"I should not have known you, I admit," said she, in reply to my challenge. "But I perfectly remember, Mr. Wrottesley, your long illness here, and how pale and thin you looked when you left your room."

"It was just after the fire," cried Amelia, the second girl, emerging from her concealment behind her sister's shoulder. "Even *I* can remember the great fire, in which poor papa's hair was burnt off, and his hands and face scorched."

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"When your carriage drove away," resumed Miss Temple, "I recollect my father and Archdeacon Roxborough agreeing that they should never see you again! It was the first time," added she, with a smile, "I ever heard the expression 'a church-yard cough;' and the Archdeacon called me a little blockhead for asking what it meant."

Had the Archdeacon been present, I should have perhaps inquired of him what *he* meant by calling so lovely a creature a little blockhead. As it was, his name afforded a text for further inquiries; and I learned with deep regret that the poor old Archdeacon was no longer able to pay his annual visit to the Rectory; and that, disabled by chronic rheumatism, he resided wholly at York, surrounded by the attention and regard of a wide circle of friends.

"My father is on a visit to my uncle Henry, the Master of —— Hall," added Miss Temple. "Perhaps you know my uncle Henry, Mr. Wrottesley? He comes here every autumn; and it is such a relief to him to get out of Cambridge, and enjoy his quiet walks and rides with us in Wheledale!—My uncle Henry is so fond

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of this neighbourhood. He knows every tree, almost every stone, between this and Roxborough Elms!"

Ay, gentle Mary!—because *one* stone between Wrottesley Rectory and Roxborough Elms, covers the dust of all that is dearest to him on earth: for though now one of the pillars of the Anglican Church and marked for a mitre, nothing of wordly interest, nothing of learned distinction, has ever effaced from his memory those happy hours when he looked forward to feed his lovely wife and future household with bread of his own earning,—and hope was the light of his life,—and love was all in all!—

When my friend, the Doctor, returned on the morrow from visiting the brother of whom he had always been so fond, and was now so proud, he found me once more established under his roof; his three girls almost as familiar with their uncouth, foreign-looking guest, as with uncle Henry himself. He welcomed me just as I could have wished. By not reproaching me *too* severely for my absenteeism, he disposed the stray sheep to return to its fold.

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"Henry and I were talking of you only yesterday," said he, as soon as we were alone. "There is a poor woman named Nixon in the Cambridge workhouse, who became an idiot from the ill-usage of her husband, on whose account he occasionally receives benefactions from Grove, the celebrated engineer. A short time ago, Grove himself passed through, and had an interview with my brother; who was mentioning yesterday with what affection he spoke of his old friend,—with what regret of his long exile!"—

Nancy Nixon!—Poor wretch! But it was not Grove the engineer, of whose charity she ought to have been the object.

"And do you see much of the Stormonts?" said I, anxious to discover whether my former flame were likely to fall in my way.

"They pass their winters in Paris,—their summers in London," he replied. "During the autumn months, the sportsmen who crowd with them to Hawley Chase, render it too gay a place to be a safe resort for girls so young as mine. Lady Stormont is, and has always been, all kindness to us;—but the habits my

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daughters might acquire from her society, would be ill-suited to their situation in life. There is a Miss Stormont, a cousin of Sir Reginald's, often visiting there, who, though no longer young, is a person whose habits and manners are far from a safe model."

"Rose Stormont!"

"Exactly,—a noisy, rouged, dashing, fox-hunting woman, whose intimacy with her cousin Sir Reginald causes much scandal in the county;—more particularly as two out of her three sisters have been heroines of an elopement,—the one from her parents,—the other from her husband. The Stormont blood, I am afraid, does little honour to its high extraction. But enough of what will lead you to suppose that in my old age, I am grown scandalous!"—

"One word, however," said I, "before we drop the discussion of those whose conduct makes it difficult to mention them with charity. Do you ever hear or see anything of Sir Charles Roxborough?"—

"I heard him deliver what was considered a very fine speech when I was in London,

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two years ago, in the Debate upon penal colonization; and last year, (my girls who accompanied Lady Fortrose to Doncaster Races) saw him in great force, after winning the Leger with a grandson of his famous mare 'Miss Jenny.' But for years past, Lord Fortrose has permitted no communication between his wife and her brother."

"The only wise action of his I ever heard of!"—

"The world thinks otherwise. Lord Fortrose is so rough a diamond—if diamond one can call him—that the world sides with the polished gentleman who, because his irregularities assume so much method as to appear almost regular, is considered a reformed man. A single one of Sir Charles' speeches contains morality enough to set up the copybooks of half-a-hundred national schools: and I am told he is likely to marry the daughter of a wealthy dowager, whose conquest he made as Chairman of a meeting for the conversion of his old friends, the Jews!"—

"Roxborough would never have adopted the vocation of a philanthropist, unless certain it

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would pay!" said I, with deep-felt contempt for his hypocrisy, and for myself, as having been its dupe. And from *him* it was easy to turn to the man who had first warned me against him,—to Gripham.—Impossible to forbear a fling at the Brummagem splendours of my flourishing representative!—

"I see little of Mr. Gripham," replied the good doctor, with sudden stiffness, "unless when the interests of my parishioners bring us into contact."

"You could tell me no worse news of him!" cried I,—for in point of fact it was Dr. Temple's testimony which first availed to remove my prejudices against him.

"Do not, however, imagine that the coolness between us has been produced by any change in my good opinion," said Dr. Temple, earnestly aware of having, on a former occasion, pleaded successfully in his favour.

"Yet you are not the man, my dear Doctor, to be actuated by caprice!"

"I trust not! But it is only justice to tell you the exact truth. Gripham chooses to resent my rejection of the suit of his son,—or rather

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my daughter Mary's rejection. For it was a repugnance purely personal. Wrottesley Gripham's fortune and situation in life, are even beyond what we pretend to."

"*Wrottesley* Gripham!" cried I. "The mania for converting that name into a Christian one seems to be epidemic. *This* Wrottesley, I presume, is the would-be Member of Parliament?"—

"Precisely.—It was one of the advantages of the connection especially insisted upon. But had he a prospect of sitting in the Upper House instead of the Lower, my girl would have entertained the same distaste for his flippant and forward vulgarity."

I contemplated Mary Temple with all the more interest when we met at the dinner-table, where, fifteen years before, I had seen her a little rowly-powly thing, climb upon her father's knees at dessert. It was something for one of the three portionless daughters of a poor parson, to have refused a man on whom his father offered to settle two thousand a-year. But the more I saw of her, the more I felt convinced that she was right. Miss Temple was twenty

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times too good for the mansion with the brass plate on the door. There was an innate elegance about her, an ease in all her movements, an intelligent intonation in her very voice, that disposed one at first sight in her favour. And when I came to know her better, and discovered all she was to her father, all she had been to her sisters, to the village, and the poor,—my heart swelled so painfully at the idea of what I and Wrottesley Hall might have become had such a being condescended twelve years before to become our guardian angel, that, for the first time, I became conscious of the grievance of having a sprinkling of snow upon my head, and symptoms of gout in my constitution.

How soon it occurred to me after my arrival to entreat the hospitality of the Doctor for my friend Grove, on pretence of consulting him about the impending railroad, but in reality to beg him to make out estimates of the cost of rebuilding Wrottesley Hall, is no affair of the reader. It was not fear of the expense which made me hesitate in the undertaking; for notwithstanding my jealousy of Gripham's display of

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prosperity, I was forced to admit that, after clearing every shilling of incumbrance from the estate and effecting all its improvements, I had a surplus of six years' income safely invested, to expend on the rebuilding of my house. But where would be the use of wasting time and tens of thousands on the construction of a palace for Mr. Wrottesley Smith or Monsieur le Baron Wrottesley de Villemont to reside in, or perhaps for Mr. Wrottesley Gripham to hire at their hands? I must first be sure of a sufficient inducement for renouncing my palm-trees and peepul-trees. I must first feel certain of my own vocation for undertaking that advocacy of the public interests of my district which my friend Gripham was for entrusting to his jackanapes of a son.

"All leather and prunella, my dear Wrottesley!" cried my now hearty and happy friend Grove, as we discussed the matter frankly together. "In the wantonness of self-will, you have given yourself up to your whims, till they have frittered away your life into shreds and patches. You have learned indeed from the holy schooling of nature to appreciate the greatness and good-

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ness of *her* Creator and your own. But the lesson is worth nothing unless you apply its inculcations to the matter-of-fact business of life. Luckily it is not too late to give up building Castles in the Air and lay the foundation of a substantial dwelling-house. And why should the want of a wife or a constituency obstruct your projects? Take my advice!—Establish yourself comfortably in a Wrottesley Hall adapted to the requirements of the climate and limits of your fortune; and when people see you are determined to begin life in earnest, neither the love of woman nor confidence of man will be wanting."

Grove had a right to address me with authority; for he was now not only a substantial householder, but by a loving wife and lovely children had given hostages to fortune. *He*, too, had got a little fair haired Wrottesley!—

"Ever since we parted," said he, "my life has been a task of striving and thriving.—I have already as good an income as I can enjoy, and more work than I can do; though to lighten my labours I have lately taken into partnership my sister Bessie's husband,

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formerly my clerk. Belle is married to one of her cousins,—a capital farmer, by whose intelligence the value of Wilsbury is doubled;—though to be sure the snug house which I built for them on the site of the old farm, must be taken into account. If I had not so many nephews and nieces in addition to my own half-dozen," said he cheerfully, "I promise you I would leave the golden-leafed laurels of the railroad era to be gathered by my friend Brunel,—shut up shop,—and cross my hands for the rest of my days."

"Not till you have established a clerk of the works at Wrottesley Hall, if you please!" cried I, cheered by the influence of his sanguine spirit. "Henceforward, I will build no Castles but such as can be put together with mortar and a trowel."

It will scarcely be doubted that, in such plans, I was warmly encouraged by my friends.—And the daily-improving prospects of the country added new sunshine to my own. For nearly three years, the rebuilding of the house occupied my whole attention. With the exception of a single autumnal excursion to

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Villa Verde, (at the close of which I presented the estate to young de Villemont, as a pleasant appendage to his father's hereditary property in the neighbourhood,) I have not once quitted the farm-house in Wrottesley village where I established myself to supervise my workmen, and where I have diverted my leisure evenings by enditing the foregoing confessions.

Of my motive for undertaking the task, I am not over-certain. — Perhaps I was in hopes that the frank confession of my past follies might do somewhat to soften the adverse sentence of Mary Temple; who, in reply to my schemes of future happiness, has more than once pronounced "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel!"—

I *will* excel, however, and Mary shall own it! The effervescence of my youth is past: but the calm contentment of riper years will leave me nothing to regret. After the approaching election, I am to write myself down M.P., and commence my arduous duties as a servant of the country.

From those to whom much is given, much shall be required; and but for the years of

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study which have ripened faculties dwarfed by excess of premature sunshine, I should tremble at the responsibility of taking a part in that mighty congress which is labouring with all its energies to assign to England the leading place in European civilization.

Meanwhile, I am to celebrate my house-warming. In the course of a few months, the upholsterers will have rendered the new Hall as comfortable within as it is already elegant and imposing without; when I may boast of possessing one of the finest seats in the kingdom.

I would fain invite such of my readers as have followed me indulgently to the end, to witness my installation, (which I promise them shall be worthy the far-famed hospitality of the West-Riding,) but that I am afraid they would accuse me in return, of recurring to my old weakness of building CASTLES IN THE AIR!—

THE END.

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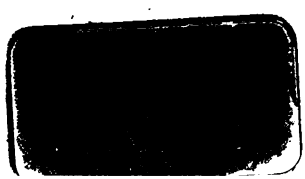

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